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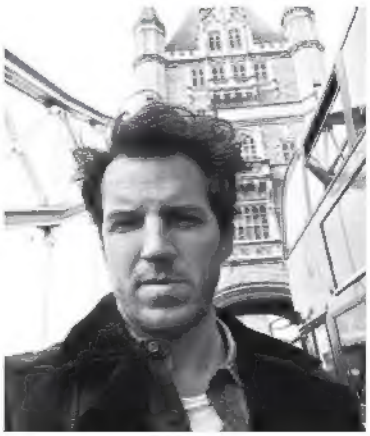
Julian Tepper
"Watching my father's video on MTV as a kid was an incredible thrill", says Tepper. Between the Records, a selection from his forthcoming novel, features a character with a similar background. As a member of the band Natural History, Tepper co-wrote the song "Don't You Ever", later adapted by the legendary indie group Spoon.

Dan Hyman
In An American Outlaw, Hyman recounts Hugh Hefner's 1963 obscenity arrest. "It shows how far people were willing to go at the time to maintain the status quo", he says of the case. Also in this issue, Hyman profiles music mastermind Zane Lowe, whose "inquisitiveness and disarming personality explain why artists open up to him".



Austin Hargrave
Besides "compliments for vacation pictures on Facebook", this Manchester, UK-born photographer's accomplishments include a portfolio packed with portraits of everyone from Donald Glover to Hillary Clinton to Lorde. He compares photographing Zane Lowe to shooting a sports event: "He didn't stand still for the entire show."

Mike Mignola
"I've always loved English legends. A guy going out in a suit of armour covered in spikes to fight a dragon — that's just made for comics", says Mignola. In Return of the Lambton Worm, the Hellboy creator's superhero wrestles with good, evil and a giant invertebrate. A third Hellboy film, starring David Harbour of Stranger Things, is out next year.

Brian B Hayes
An internationally renowned photographer whose work is published worldwide. Brian is mostly known for his glamour style photography. With over 25 years of shooting gorgeous models Brian's work has graced the covers of top men's magazines worldwide. Brian also publishes a series of glamour calendars which are best sellers every year. You can find his work at BrianBHayes.com.

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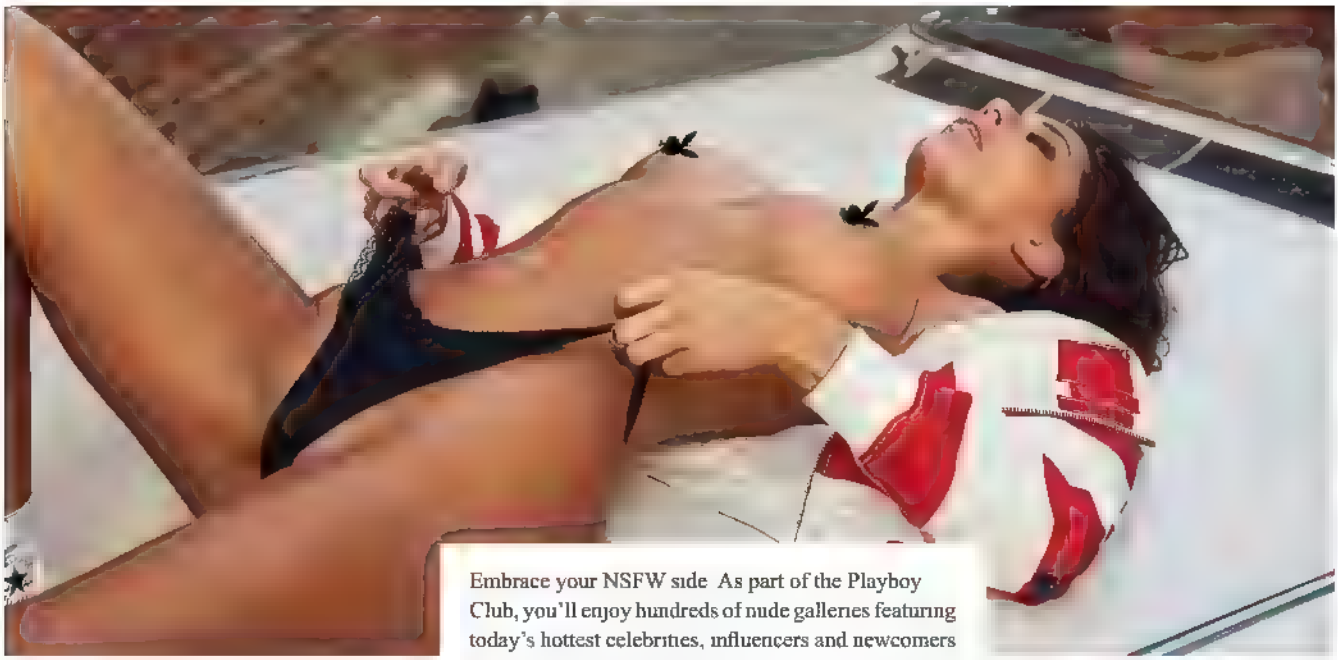

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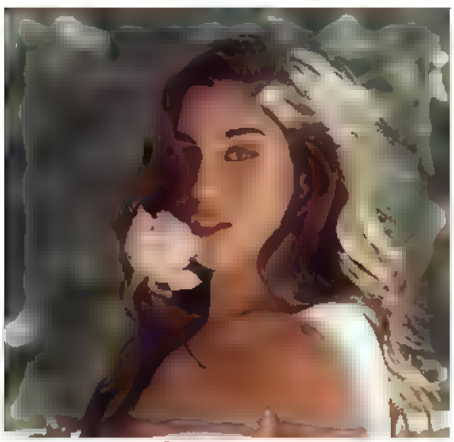

Lauren Breaks Free

Following the announcement that her chart-topping pop group Fifth Harmony had disbanded, singer Lauren Jauregui spoke to us first about her future in music. See the accompanying Eden-inspired pictorial only on Playboy.com.

PRODUCTS

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Exclusive to Playboy members our first Centerfold Boards collection. The skateboards feature Playmates such as Kennedy Summers, Elizabeth Elam and Amberleigh West (below) The first drop is available Lauren Breaks Free this summer

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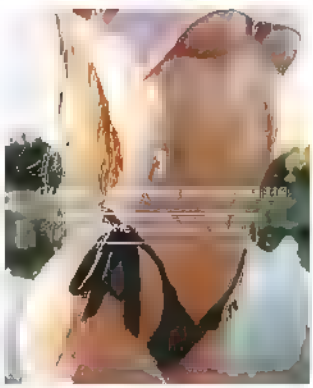

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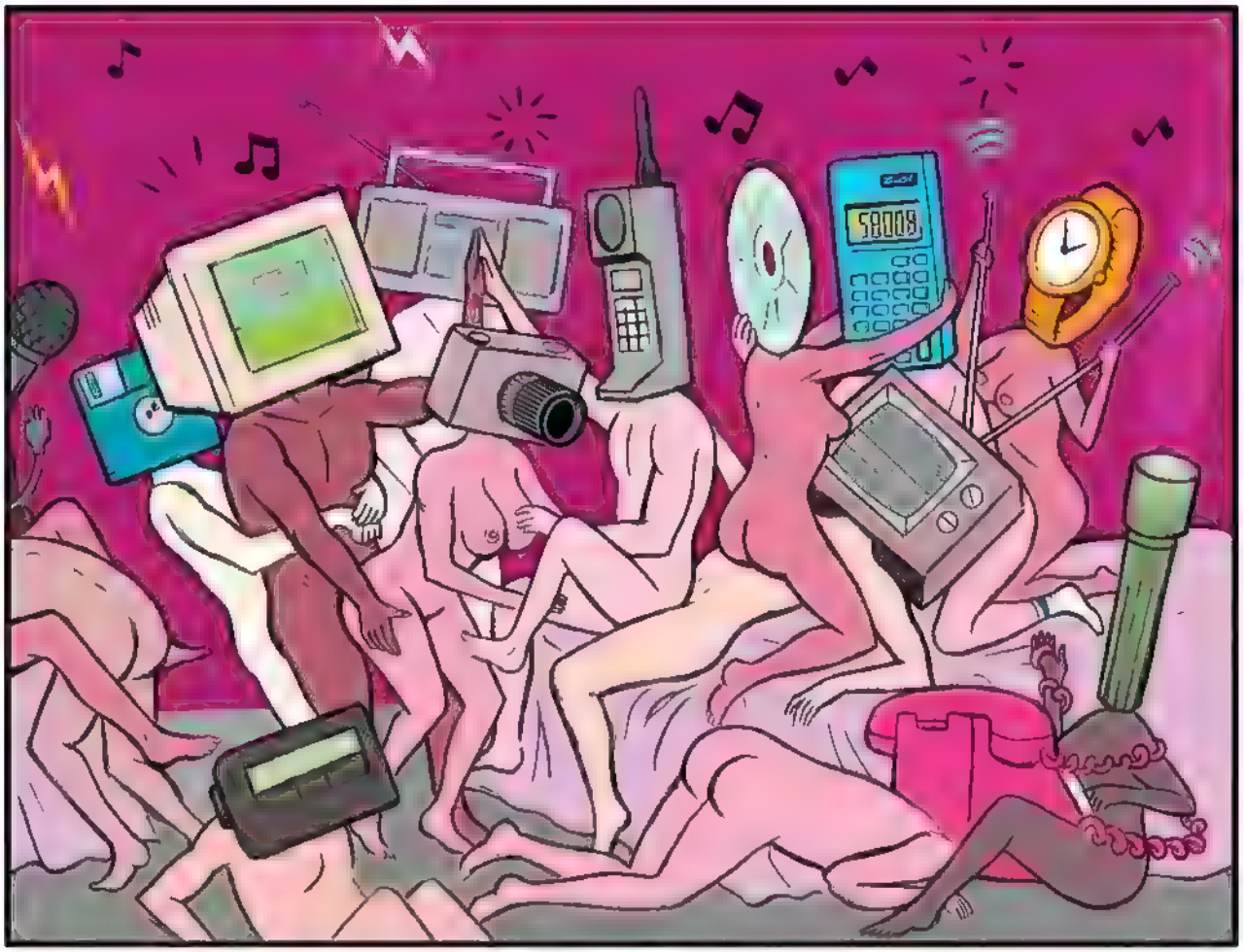
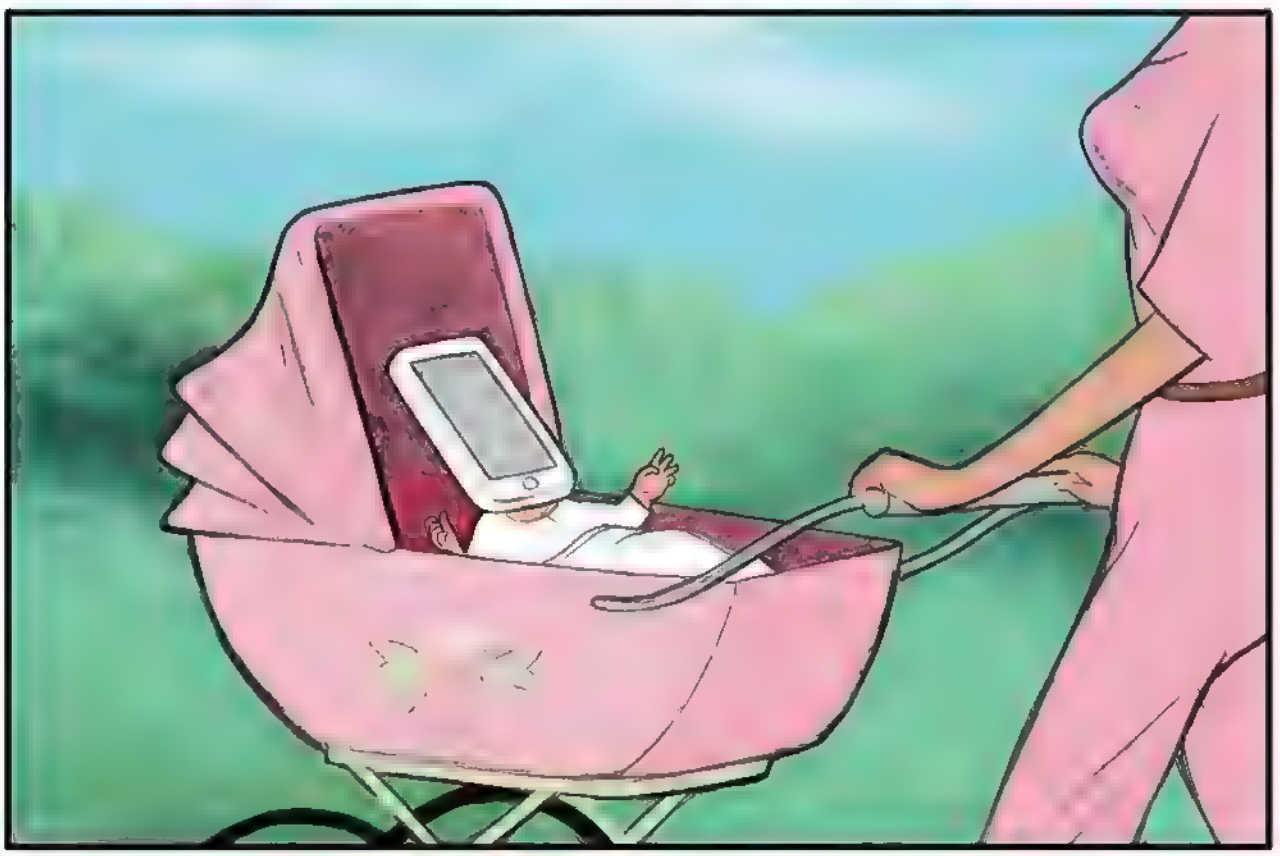




WORD WARRIOR

From [illegible] delaran[illegible] [illegible] Dee [illegible] Smith's delivering some of the most vital performan[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] apo[illegible] of hope [illegible]er for Amer[illegible] can voices

RYAN PFLUGER FOR THE NEW YORKER

and Orthodox Jewish residents of a Brooklyn neighbourhood. She was later commissioned by the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles to create *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, a sweeping look at the riots that followed the acquittal of LAPD officers charged with beating Rodney King. With *Notes From the Field*, her initial goal was to investigate racism and poverty in her hometown of Baltimore. In each case, what makes Smith's shows so effective is her commitment to inhabiting other lives in a way that theater is uniquely equipped to facilitate. "I'm taking a tape recorder, going around and seeing if I can get over any kind of limitations of my race, my gender and my age in order to experience America from the point of view of people very different from me."

Smith interviews upward of a few hundred people per project, developing what she says is more a "tapestry" than a conventional storyline. The resulting work goes far beyond the sum of its parts. Minimal costuming and props (glasses and hoodies, cell phones and coffee mugs) mark obvious physical differences, but it's Smith's granular study of voice that brings each character roaring to life. No slang goes unuttered, no vocal cadence isn't hers to master. Therein lies the power of her work: "My grandfather, when I was a child, said, 'If you say a word often enough, it becomes you.' And so I've really been trying to become America, word-for-word."

Smith became interested in the potency of speech — "how Shakespeare's language could deliver not just content but identity" — during her training at the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco. "I started studying everything I could that had to do with expression of language," she says, "anything that required a speaker to not just give information but to influence and sway the audience." Political rhetoric became a pillar of her studies, particularly recordings of Fidel Castro, Che Guevara and JFK. Politicians informed her third one-woman play, *House Arrest*, a non-narrative show about the U.S. presidency, which she researched in part by going on the road with both Bill Clinton and Bob Dole during the 1996 presidential campaign. (Presidents have become something of a regular feature in Smith's life. In 2013 she received a National Humanities Medal from Barack Obama.)

For *Notes From the Field* she interviewed more than 250 subjects to unpack how troubled students, particularly young people of colour and indigenous heritage and in areas of poverty, go from acting up in class to getting trapped in America's carceral state. Smith consulted everyone from Sherrilyn Ifill, president and director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, to Niya Kenny, the Spring Valley High student who filmed a female classmate being dragged out of her chair by an on-campus cop. Nearly all the monologues share a sense that disadvantaged students are by and large denied the understanding and complexity enjoyed by their more mainstream peers. What started as a project about law enforcement in her hometown became an opportunity to examine the whole country — a country hobbled by prejudice so deep that it's become reflexive.

So why, with a message that urgent, would an artist of Smith's soaring ambition choose theatre?

"When I was younger I was like, 'I cannot just wait around for them to put me in the Glamorama,'" she says, referring to her short-lived stint on *All My Children* and the salon on that show. "'I'd better spend my time figuring out how to practice this craft that I care about, or this is gonna be bad.' I always sort of regret that I didn't try to make my career in television bigger, for a lot of reasons: influence, a bigger platform. But I'm not a TV warrior."

She has a lot of respect for her *For the People* co-stars such as Hope Davis, but she's particularly mesmerised by the power of television writers, especially the ones she has encountered in Shondaland. "I think Shonda is a historic phenomenon," she says. "I don't think there has ever been a black woman with the type of influence she has."

The growing access black women have to public creative outlets is a recurring theme in our conversation. She perks up at the mention of *Insecure* creator and star Issa Rae and suggests that if Toni Morrison were starting out now she would dominate prestige drama television. Even at the beginning of 2018, we are in a remarkably fertile moment for black women of all stripes expressing themselves in public: *Master of None's* Lena Waithe debuted her hour-long drama The Chi in January, books such as Ijeoma Oluo's *So You Want to Talk About Race* and Brittney Cooper's Eloquent Rage offer new — and accessible — perspectives on black lives.

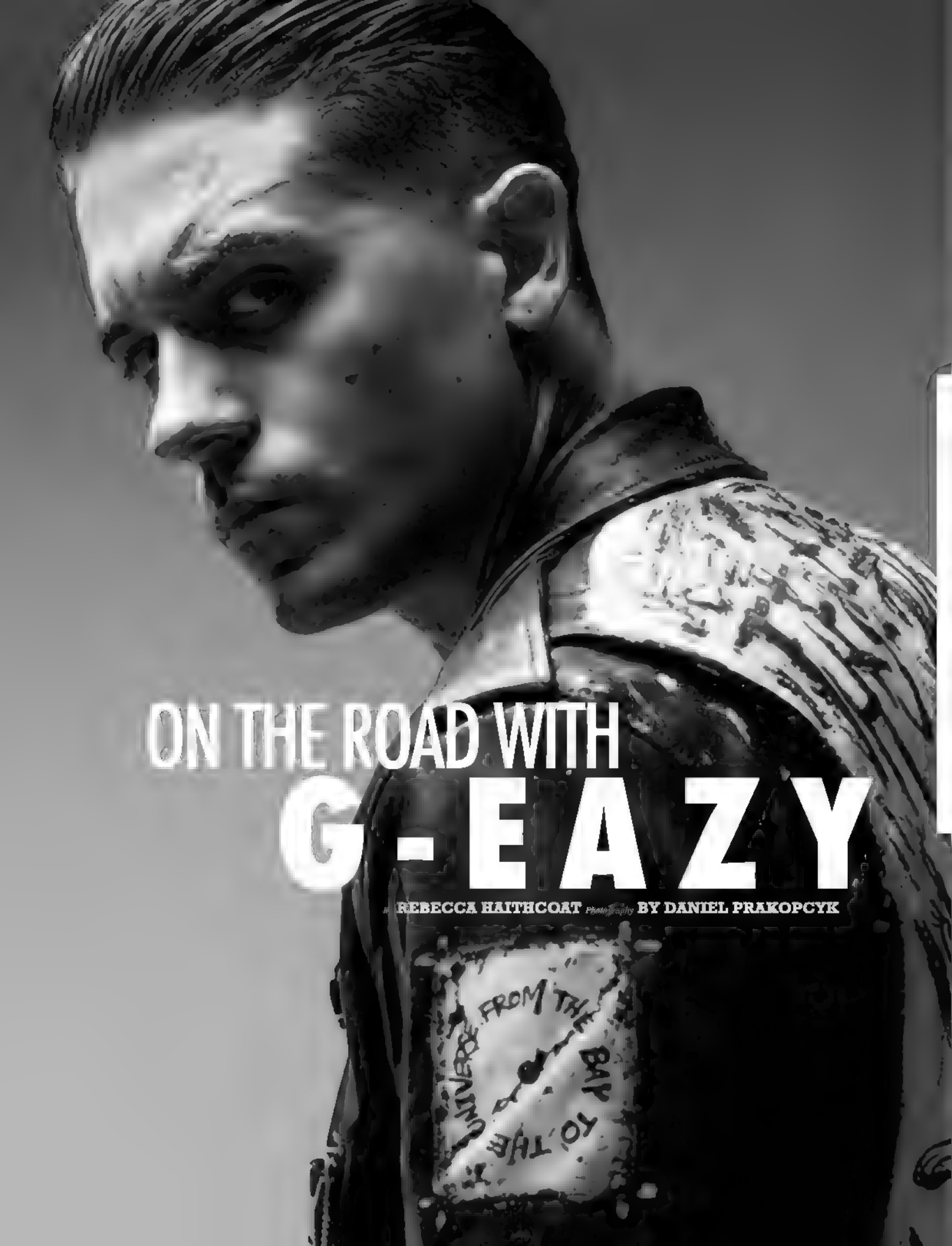
But the stories about young black girls in *Notes From the Field* show just how much further we have to go. Once again, it comes down to language. "There's a cop that says it best,"

"I'VE REALLY BEEN TRYING TO BECOME AMERICA, WORD-FOR-WORD."

Smith says while describing the 2015 incident at a pool party in McKinney, Texas during which a black teenage girl dressed only in a bikini was thrown to the ground and restrained by a police officer. "He walks over to that group of girls and says, 'If you don't stop running your mouth....' That's the thing I have always felt anxious about as a black woman."

Smith watched the video many times that summer. To her, it represented more than just police brutality; it was a visual testimony that being black and female means you're not allowed to be three-dimensional — carefree, messy, young. "It's one thing if a black woman is saying words from a script in a movie or television show," she says. "But if it's the words coming out of your own mouth? You'd really better watch yourself."

Against that constant threat, Smith has found a way to confront an unjust world in its own language. Her recent successes, spanning theatre, cable and prime-time broadcast TV, suggest that the world might finally be ready to listen. ■



ON THE ROAD WITH G-EAZY

BY REBECCA HAITHCOAT Photography BY DANIEL PRAKOPCYK

Tips on staying sane while touring the world (spoiler alert: sour candy) from one of the hardest-working rappers in the game

G-Eazy's years of hustling mixtapes on street corners have blurred into extensive tours of the world's arenas, but the 29-year-old Bay Area rapper and music-business grad hasn't forgotten where he comes from. Shell out for a meet-and-greet ticket, and you'll pregame in a decked-out Airstream trailer and be coiffed with G-Eazy's cut, courtesy of his best friend and personal barber. It puts the standard selfie and-hug VIP package to shame — and why wouldn't you want to take after the guy? Last December's The Beautiful & Damned, his third major-label studio album, has already gone gold. It includes "Him & I," a duet with his girlfriend, Halsey, that hit number one on the Billboard pop chart. To borrow the title of his first album: Must be nice. With the repetition and constant travelling of being on tour, how do you stay sane? I don't think I am. [laughs] I lost that a long time ago. To stay grounded, the most important thing is calling home, whether that's family or friends you grew up with. It's important not to lose touch with that.

What's a tour story you'll tell your pals in the retirement home one day?

It's always funny when girls throw their panties and bras on stage; they'll write their phone numbers inside. Some of the wildest stories come from talking to fans who've been to 40 or 50 shows. That's some Grateful Dead shit. It's inspiring that anybody cares that much to come back year after year.

Anything crazy in your contract rider?

I love sour candy — not the kind you get at the gas station; you gotta find red or green sour belts at a candy store. I drink a lot of coffee to get through the day. Having brand-new socks and boxers every day so you can just throw them away and never do laundry is pretty much the coolest thing ever.

Recently you tweeted that "life is hella good." What has made it so?

It's important to take a step back to acknowledge and appreciate all the good things going on. I'm in my 20s. I'm healthy. This is my third album on a major label, and they've all had platinum singles. And I have a really amazing girlfriend who I have the number one song on the radio with.

Speaking of your girlfriend, what's the sexiest quality a woman can have?

Confidence. Knowledge of self. Halsey's got a really strong identity. And she's got a really, really big energy and personality. It's not necessarily being the loudest person in the room or the one who talks the most, but her presence is really beautiful and powerful and sexy.

What does it feel like to achieve that sort of milestone with somebody you're in a relationship with?

It's crazy. Doing SNL was f#cking crazy. When you do a song with somebody, you kind of attach to them for the lifetime of that song. Imagine you do a song with somebody you hate — you're going to have to travel with them to perform it, just eternally connected. So to get to share that with the person I'm sleeping with is really dope.

The tabloids are always running stories about celebrities who break up "due to their schedules." Is that a real thing or an excuse?

That's actually a real thing. We both have exhausting schedules. And you employ a lot of people, so it's not just you and your job at the end of the day. At the end of my last run I'd played, like, 250 shows, not to mention video shoots and interviews and red carpet — the travelling alone is a lot. So it's important to make the effort to carve out time for your personal life.

What is your greatest temptation or your biggest vice?

Uhhhh — sex, drugs and alcohol. And sour candy.

G-Eazy embarks on his Endless Summer US tour this July.

Djazel
ARYANNA & MARTIN FOR NARS

What is your ethnic background?
Portuguese

Where were you born? Where did you grow up? Where do you live now?
I was born in Toronto, Ontario, Canada! I spent part of my childhood growing up in Toronto and the other half of my childhood growing up in Georgetown (just North West of Toronto). I currently live in Toronto.

You're officially a Playboy model, what does this mean to you?
This is a significant accomplishment because being a Playboy model was just something that I fantasized about when I was younger and never thought it would actually happen or materialize. Looking back and seeing everything in my life thus far come around full circle is a trip. I only started modelling less than three years ago and I feel as though I've accomplished a lot in a short time! Becoming a Playboy model only seriously entered my radar and goals list about a year ago, look where all my hard work and determination got me!

What's your favourite colour?
Pink.

What type of music do you listen to?
I listen mostly to Hip-Hop and R&B.

Who are some of your favourite artists?
Some of my favourite artists right now include 6LACK, Anders, Lemin, Kendrick Lamar, Rihanna, Rae Sremmurd, Nicki Minaj and Cardi B.

Favourite movie of all time?
Deadpool 2

How important is staying fit and working out to you?
Staying fit and working out is very important to me. I do my best to eat as healthy as possible by eating all organic non-GMO foods, fruits and vegetables. I've cut back on animal protein but I try to make sure that any animal protein that I do eat is free-range, organic, without antibiotics etc. My lifestyle keeps me pretty active too. I have two dogs and I walk them 3-4 times a day for at least 20 minutes each walk.

Would you rather watch the movie or read the book?
Honestly, I like doing both and then deciding which was better!

Turn-ons
Kindness, good hygiene, humour, intelligence, cooking skills, ambition, positivity

Turn-offs
Jealousy, dishonesty, insecurity, poor hygiene, poor communication skills, lack of intelligence, and negativity

What's your favourite delicacy?
I'm obsessed with escargot! I always order it whenever I see it on a restaurant's menu

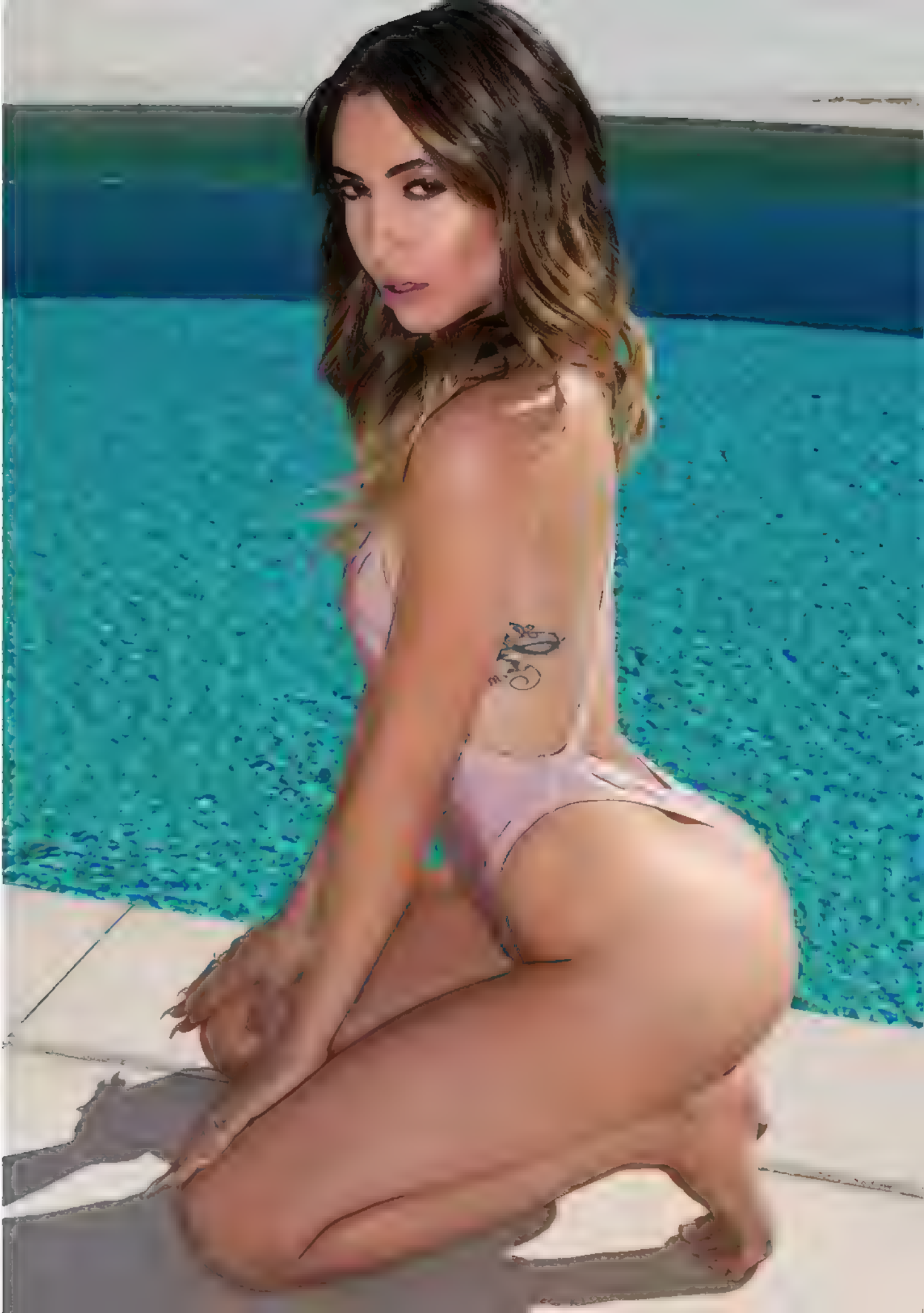
What's your favourite junk food?
Takis, the Fuego kind in the purple bag!

Do you like to travel? Where's the most interesting place you have visited?
I love to travel but my list of places I'd like to travel to is still pretty lengthy! I've only been to a few places - Cuba, D.R., eastern Canada, Vegas, LA and Mexico. So far, the most interesting place I've been to is Tulum, Mexico - I absolutely loved it there! The food was delicious, the people were so kind, the architecture was beautiful and despite popular belief, I actually felt safe and very at home during my time there.

Describe yourself using only 3 adjectives
Feisty, exotic, and determined

What advice would you give aspiring models just entering the industry?
Don't let anyone tell you that your goals and dreams aren't attainable because trust me, you'll hear a lot of that negativity, but you can't allow that to hold you back or drag you down. I don't know how many times I heard "no", got rejection letters, or was put down because of my tattoos but I never let it get to me and I never allowed other people's judgement to cloud my desires or goals.

If you can change one thing in the world, what would it be?
If I could change one thing in the world, it would be humans' predisposition of self-destruction. When I look around and see how people operate our societies and our world, it makes me physically ill and emotional. Despite all of the knowledge we have, we seem to be working against it simply because money is more important than our health, our planet's health and our children's health. It's sad that the earth has just become a disposable dumping ground and that we'd rather look for other habitable planets as a plan B instead of nurturing and caring for the planet we already live on.



JAZZ

A journey into the heart of the all-American art form, with the help of jazz-pop legend Don Was, grassroots impresario Meghan Stabile and some of today's finest practitioners

Don Was is nervous. We're in his room at the Bowery Hotel, sitting next to three-time Grammy-winning singer-songwriter Lucinda Williams. It's the first time she's hearing Vanished Gardens, her new album with the legendary jazz saxophonist Charles Lloyd and his group the Marvels. Was produced the album and is putting it out on Blue Note Records, where he has served as president since 2012.

By **LAUREN DU GRAF**

Meeting with Williams was not part of today's plan. We were in the middle of an interview when Was spotted her in the lobby of the hotel.

"This is so kismet, it's ridiculous," she said, reaching up to embrace him. Williams, a Southern-bred artist who has spent more than three decades exploring the Americana landscape, had been at the Bowery for weeks, putting together a deal for her forthcoming memoir. Was had been trying to contact her for her blessing on a final mix.

"Got any time now?" he asked. We headed up to Was's suite, and Williams settled into a mohair-upholstered lounge chair. He handed her headphones and watched as she listened to the first track. Her face was inscrutable.

"This is intense," says the 65-year-old producer, who's in New York to work on a new project for the Rolling Stones. (He doesn't want to reveal too much but offers this. "It's really early. What I can tell you is that they're certainly inspired, they're definitely not done making music, and they're writing songs together. And they're good.") He's wearing a fedora, his face framed by a mess of natty dark hair. A black Armani overcoat hangs over an outfit that's all athleisure — a Columbia Sportswear zip-up and Nike Tech fleece sweatpants. A tangle of necklaces circle his neck, including one stamped with the words F#CK YALL.

Was produced Williams's 2011 record, Blessed, but the stakes are different this time. It's Williams's first album for Blue Note, and she has never done a collaboration like this before. Due out June 8, the album was Was's idea. Tour dates are booked, including a headlining slot at the Playboy Jazz Festival.

Before Was took the helm, the storied jazz label was on life support. "They were going to close Blue Note down and sell the catalogue from a website with some Blue Note T-shirts, and there would be no new music," Was later tells me. He proposed to his future bosses that the label broaden its aesthetic. One of them asked Was how far his vision for the label extended.

"I said, 'I don't see any reason why we couldn't have Ryan Adams or Lucinda Williams on the label.' " Was pauses. "And here we are." (Blue Note has released Adams's last four albums.)

For the moment, the label has been rescued. Was has delivered just what he promised, an infusion of energy from outside the jazz establishment, bringing in well-known names with both edge and commercial appeal. He has also been in Miami, recording a collaborative album for the label with Iggy Pop and Dr. Lonnie Smith. "It was Iggy's idea," Was says.

Projects like these raise a question that is all but ubiquitous in this world. When it comes to crossover, where is the line between art and mere marketability? Peruse recent year-end lists of best-selling jazz albums, and you'll see that straight-ahead jazz no longer rules the charts; it's artists like Norah Jones, Michael Bublé and the team-up of Lady Gaga and Tony Bennett.

Sitting in this hotel room, in this company, with this recording playing, the beauty of what I'm hearing makes that line seem, for the moment, irrelevant.

• • •

In 2012, Don Was (born Donald Fagenson), became the third president in the history of Blue Note Records. Founded in 1939 by German émigrés Alfred Lion and Francis Wolff, the label helped launch the careers of Art Blakey, Herbie Hancock and Lee Morgan. Was is the first musician to head Blue Note — not as a "failed saxophonist," as his predecessor Bruce Lundvall described himself, but as a player who spent close to a decade doing straight-ahead jazz gigs in Detroit, went on to share stages with Bob Dylan and Elton John and is still called upon by the Stones. (The sartorial contrast is similarly marked. Lundvall was rarely seen without a suit and was known for his aesthetic attention to detail that included a pinkie ring.) In the early 1980s Was co-founded the band Was (Not Was), a group with a big hit — 1987's "Walk the Dinosaur," >>

with its indelible refrain "Boom! Boom! Shakalakalaka boom!" — and a revolving door of guests including MC5's Wayne Kramer and trumpeter Marcus Belgrave. He went on to produce Dylan, the B-52s, Carly Simon and Bonnie Raitt. He has been producing the Rolling Stones since 1994's Voodoo Lounge.

Before becoming Blue Note president, Was didn't trust record companies. "I wasn't looking for a job," he says. "In fact, I was really hoping to never have a job." Yet he was attracted to the label, which had meant a lot to him as a young man. Was connected deeply with the sound of Charles Lloyd, a musical shape-shifter who has played with the Beach Boys and the Doors. Lloyd's rock-infused 1966 live album, Forest Flower, was one of the first jazz albums to sell more than a million copies, turning a generation of rock fans toward the genre. In his personal collection, Was has more records by Lloyd than any other musician.

While Lloyd is often referred to as one of the first jazz crossover artists, the saxophonist sees his music as part of a continuous expression that has emerged from the blues: "Dylan, the Doors, the Beach Boys, the rock groups of the 1960s come out of the great tradition of the blues," Lloyd tells me over e-mail. "My earliest gigs in Memphis were with the great blues masters Howlin' Wolf, B.B. King, Johnny Ace, Bobby Blue Bland, Big Mama Thornton, Rosco Gordon. I came through them on my way to Bird, Lady Day and Prez (aka Lester Young). The thread of that experience is in my musical DNA." Lloyd was one of the first musicians Was invited to the label.

Was uses the word frivolity repeatedly to describe his decision-making process, but he does so with the knowing glimmer of an artist attuned to the wisdom of chance and the absurd. His newest endeavours for Blue Note reflect this sense of whimsy. Take the subscription-based Blue Note Review, a limited-edition boxed set designed to bring tactile romance back into music consumption. The first edition, Peace, Love & Fishing, includes a vinyl double album by current artists, a reissue of an out-of-print album by Blue Mitchell, a "lifestyle zine" with a foreword by Ram Dass, lithographs by Francis Wolff, a scarf designed by John Varvatos and a turntable mat dreamed up by Ryan Adams. Was blurted out the title in a meeting. "Fishing is what improvisational musicians do every day. Sometimes it's a marlin, sometimes it's a boot," he says. "Peace and love — well, that's obvious."

The next Review, tentatively titled Spirit & Time, is drummer-centric. Was commissioned drummers currently on the label, including Tony Allen, Chris Dave, Brian Blade and Kendrick Scott, to reimagine the overlooked records of drumming legend Tony Williams.

In an era when every label in every genre has had major struggles with declining album sales, Was sees the freedom to reinvent. The next album from Wayne Shorter, the senior member of the Blue Note roster, will be released in tandem with a graphic novel; the CDs will be packaged inside the book. "It's pretty abstract," Was says. "It's not just a graphic novel; it's Wayne Shorter's graphic novel."

Over e-mail, Shorter explains that Was is one of the few "chance-takers in the business.... His dedication to the real meaning of 'business' is the business of life as the ultimate art, which transcends the quest for attaining awards and fame. On the contrary, Don Was has the strength of character to be faithful to the process of questing the means to an end, rather than the other way around."

Was tells me that the company is profitable and it has "incredible support from Capitol." (Capitol Music Group, which encompasses Blue Note and several other labels, is in turn part of Universal Music Group.) The Blue Note at Sea cruise brings in enough money to pay for a year of jazz albums. The label has also partnered with Vans sneakers and Sonos speakers. Ventures like this allow Was to tell artists they can go in the studio and do whatever they want.

I ask him how projects like Shorter's pencil out for Blue Note. "It's just worth doing," he replies. "I don't necessarily believe that you do a profit-and-loss projection for each record. I think you look at the overall picture of how the company is doing and make allowances for someone to do something extraordinary."

Beyond the walls of Blue Note, other major players have taken different tacks. Roy Hargrove, a trumpeter with a pair of Grammys and a level of respect usually reserved for artists far beyond his 48 years, spearheaded the genre's reach outward toward hip-hop and neo-soul, particularly through his RH Factor albums and his work with artists such as D'Angelo, Erykah Badu and Common. But these days Hargrove tours with an acoustic quintet. He's playing some of the most straight-ahead jazz of his career.

"I'm coming more into the traditional style now that they're forgetting about the roots," he says. "The most challenging way to play, to me, is acoustically; the most challenging way to catch people's ear is with the bare necessities."

"Do you discriminate on the basis of different notes? No, you go by something that either touches you deeply or it doesn't."

Hargrove is a fixture at jam sessions where he encourages young musicians to get back to the real work: a militant regimen of practise until the tightrope walk of improvisation sounds effortless. "Don't dog out the tradition," he says. "This is the fabric of the music that you play. I don't want the young generation to forget it, so I'm putting more food into it."

The newcomers at the sessions, he says, "need to learn to take themselves out of the equation. It's not about you; it's about drawing people in with your brilliance. You have to become brilliant in order to do that. The truth is, when you play jazz, it's a spiritual connection to people, but you have to do it right."

It's a sentiment Was would most likely agree with, even as his projects stray beyond the conventional boundaries of jazz. To hear him tell it, there's a moral imperative behind such explorations. "Do you discriminate on the basis of different notes? No, you go by something that either touches you deeply or it doesn't."

...

In the weeks before taking the gig at Blue Note, Was spent several hours a night trying to locate the scene's pulse. His searches kept drawing him to the Revivalist, the jazz-oriented hub housed on the music site Okayplayer. This led Was to the Revive Music Group, a genre-bending agency that specialises in promoting jazz artists steeped in the language of hip-hop, and its founder, a tenacious New York transplant named Meghan Stabile.

"I told her, 'You seem to be at the centre of all the music that's exciting to me.' And so we got together. I just loved her energy and her vision for something new within the music." That meeting led to a partnership between Blue Note and Revive Music. They released three albums together between 2014 and 2016.

Stabile, now 35, is still at the epicentre of this scene. If you want to catch a glimpse of the energy that won Was over, it's on display every Tuesday in New York's Greenwich Village, where she runs a Revive session called Blue After Dark.

Down the steps at the Zinc Bar is a dark crimson room with a long, narrow bar. On Tuesdays after 11, the bar is usually lined with off-duty jazz musicians. The doorman, himself a musician, lets these guys (and yes, they're mostly men) in for free.

On a recent night, you could catch the 33-yearold drummer Justin Brown perched next to the bass player Ben Williams, also 33, nursing a bourbon. In and out is 22-year-old James Francies, a pianist who plays with the Roots, just days away from stepping into the studio to record his first album for Blue Note. Beyond the bar at the turntables is the multi-instrumentalist Casey Benjamin spinning the sort of soul, funk and R&B that tickles ears raised on sample-heavy hip-hop. Onstage, the drummer–indie rapper Kassa Overall leads a short, eclectic set before opening up the session to the audience.

The hang seems improvised, but the vibe — from the low-key lounge setting to the DJ to the high-calibre jazz by young musicians fluent in hip-hop — was orchestrated by Stabile.

"A lot of the guys who come through are off tour for a minute," she tells me over coffee in Harlem, her brown hair tucked under an army-green baseball cap. "They don't want to do the same shit they've been playing for three months. Some don't want to play; others just want to sit in, let loose and have fun." Half Mexican, half Italian, Stabile stands around five feet tall, with expressive eyes framed by thin, 1920s film-star eyebrows — but with hoop earrings and a modern swagger.

When bassist Christian McBride first checked out a Revive session a few years back, he couldn't believe what he saw. "It was absolutely amazing," he says. "All these jazz musicians were in there, almost all of them millennials. Meghan had brilliantly captured this generation that grew up loving hip-hop but that could really play jazz."

Stabile remembers that it all happened quickly. She'd just arrived in New York and was handing out flyers in the back of the original Zinc Bar, where she met Robert Glasper, still years away from releasing his Grammy-winning Black Radio. Within a year she was booking shows for Glasper and members of his band in New York. Guests like Yasiin Bey (aka Mos Def) would show up unannounced.

For her first international show, she took the Robert Glasper Experiment and Bey to South Africa in 2009. It was Bey's first trip to that country; he ended up moving there in 2013 and staying for three years.

Back then, few people took Stabile seriously. She remembers hounding Jayson Jackson, Mos Def's manager at the time. "He wouldn't answer my e-mails," she says. "He wouldn't answer my calls. I had to stalk this dude. To him I was this little girl trying to book Mos Def. These guys deal with legit, legit people, and I was in my early 20s."

She ended up getting the deal done through another connection — but not without leaving an impression on the man who had ignored her.

"I'm onstage in front of 10,000 people," Stabile says. "It was the first time we met. I tap him on the shoulder and I'm like, 'Hey, I'm Meghan. This is what I called you for,' and I pointed to the crowd."

Jackson would become her business partner. Stabile still has to struggle for recognition, but it's different now. Her consultancy has grown to include veteran jazz musicians and cultural institutions like Carnegie Hall, Jazz at Lincoln Center and the Kennedy Center, all of which look to her for advice on how to stay relevant and draw in more diverse audiences.

Her momentum is unmistakable. On an >>

"Meghan had brilliantly captured this generation that grew up loving hip-hop but that could really play jazz."

average day, she shuttles between handling conference calls with artists, planning concerts and tours, working on a business plan and plodding through a never-ending treadmill of proposals. She's a champion of the backing musician whose talent is often overshadowed by the marquee names. "They'll talk about Bilal or Jill Scott, but will they talk about the artists behind them? They are the ones making artists sound the way they sound," she says.

She uses words like urgently and immediately to talk about musicians she believes deserve a broader audience, as in "People need to know who the f#ck they are immediately."

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Stabile, who grew up in Dover, New Hampshire, enrolled at the Berklee College of Music as a vocal-performance major. By the time she left, she had switched to a music-business major. She never met her father, and she survived an abusive relationship with her mother — experiences that, looking back, fuelled her ambition, maybe to a fault. Her aunt gave her a guitar for her 14th birthday, and music became her refuge. "I guess you could say I was playing the blues," she says.

Working behind the bar at Wally's Cafe, a small, beloved jazz bar in Boston, she fell in love with the form and absorbed the struggles of its practitioners, especially trumpeter Igmar Thomas.

"I found myself explaining a lot of things, foundational questions," says Thomas. "She would ask, 'Why is it such a struggle? Why aren't more people attracted to jazz instead of the watered-down thing?' I had to explain to her that a jazz musician in this day and age has made a decision. This is not financial investment school."

Stabile felt a sense of anger that was "probably not healthy," she says. She resented that she hadn't been exposed to jazz growing up in Dover and was infuriated that jazz musicians, full of talent and discipline, were often paid little and treated like shit. She knew how to throw parties and had a knack for talking her way into booking venues. One day, as they were walking past a club in Cambridge, Thomas challenged Stabile to get him a gig there. She walked right in and walked out with a date and a budget of $700.

Things got rougher after she moved to New York. Craig "Butter" Glanville, a Harlem-based producer and drummer whose great-uncle is Dizzy Gillespie, mentored Stabile once she arrived. "She was very green. How green is green? Fluorescent green," he says. "This game isn't for everyone. It's tough, and then you're going to put it probably times five or 10 being a female. I know dudes be dumbass motherf#ckers, super dicks. You got to be a woman and then deal with this?"

Stabile rarely goes out these days, not unless there's a real reason to. She tries to be up at six AM for prayers and meditation. It's all preparation for the next phase of her journey. "What just happened, that was the warm-up," she says.

She still advises a number of emerging young musicians. And she keeps the Tuesday night sessions going — not for the money but for the music.

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Back in Was's suite at the Bowery, Williams is concerned about the vocals. She wants more compression. She's after that Tammy Wynette sound. "It would be one thing if I were Billie Holiday," she says.

Was suggests listening to the rest of the album without headphones, so she takes them off. The mood in the room shifts as the music comes over the speakers, Lloyd's breathy tenor saxophone in a dance with Williams's charred, sinewy voice.

They went through a lot to keep the sound natural on the album, Was explains. There's no overdubbing, no fixes. Most tracks were recorded in one or two takes.

After a gravelly vocal passage, Williams gives a thumbs-up and grins, rocking back and forth with approval. "I'm so in love with Charles and his band," she says. "It's right where I wanted it to sit. It feels real."

By the end, her eyes are misty. "I don't want to go to Austin. I want to stay and play with the Don," she says. But she has a flight to catch. She hugs us, and she's off.

We marvel at what just happened.

"There's a scenario in which that led to the whole record never coming out," he says, "and it's not a far-fetched scenario. If she hated it, it would be over. But you just have to be fearless about it. Also, it's really f#cking good. If I thought she wasn't awesome on it and it didn't stand up with her best work, we would have scrapped it. I would never dream of a situation that would have compromised her."

He trails off, pauses and looks out the window. "So many things could have gotten thrown off. I don't think it's out of line to say there was a potential half a million dollars in damages," he says.

He pauses to register the pressure and releases it with laughter. The future, it seems, must be improvised.

ZANE LOWE

His influence on what we listen to, and how we listen to it, is almost unparalleled; his passion, and the demons that drive it, go far beyond any algorithm

BY **DAN HYMAN** *Photography by* **AUSTIN HARGRAVE**

Zane Lowe is right where he needs to be: headphones on, microphone looming in front of him, feet skittering between a trio of mixing boards. Occasionally he bumps the faders, shifting the sound from his ears out to the room via mammoth speakers aimed straight at his face. On this crisp February morning, the New Zealand–born, London-honed and currently Los Angeles–based DJ lords over an airy Culver City recording studio situated across a parking lot from Apple's fortress-like LA headquarters. Most weekday mornings he's here, surrounded by a small team of young producers, recording his propulsive, almost manic Beats 1 internet radio show.

For the next two hours, the 44-year-old who regularly lands some of the biggest interviews in music, from Kanye West to Ed Sheeran to Morrissey, and in the decentralised age of streaming now stands as one of the few remaining name-brand radio DJs talks at motormouth speed. He snatches off his headphones as soon as a song has started playing and launches into conversation with any of several onlookers. As is almost always the case with Lowe, today's talk centres on music. A lifelong hip-hop fan, he starts assessing the current crop of top-tier talent. Drake is "just so smart!" 2 Chainz is "better than almost everybody." Donald Glover? "Love him!"

Slim and stubble-headed with a salt-and-pepper beard, Lowe has a reputation for being fanatical about all things music. When he believes in something — an artist, a song or, since taking his post at Apple in 2015, the power of the music-streaming economy — the man won't hesitate to proselytise. He spent 12 years at BBC Radio 1, where he became the UK's most influential DJ by breaking such A-list artists as Sheeran and Adele; conducting lengthy, emotional and often viral interviews with heavyweight subjects including West, Jay-Z, Rick Rubin and Chris Martin; and bringing a rare and palpable intensity to his show that made every episode feel like a vital listen.

Then Beats co-founder Jimmy Iovine sold his company to Apple for $3 billion, helped the tech giant imagine a music-streaming service, dubbed it Apple Music and, with help from former Beats chief creative officer and Nine Inch Nails frontman Trent Reznor, >>

convinced Lowe to join the fray. Soon Lowe had relocated to Los Angeles with his wife and two young sons. Assuming the mantle of creative director for Apple Music, he essentially became the controlling voice for the company's new internet radio station, Beats 1.

Now Lowe is a true believer in music's streaming future. Or perhaps he's just a dedicated company man. Either way, tune in to his show on your Apple mobile device any given morning, and if he's getting behind a song, listen as he demands, "Add it! Share it! Keep it moving!" Lowe came to Apple for a new challenge, something different from a traditional radio gig. And though he admits he originally thought streaming "wasn't even a thing" — more an auxiliary to the music-listening experience than the final destination — he has since become its loudest champion.

"I love how the digital evolution of art and subscription is making things accessible," Lowe says. "I listen to more music than I've ever listened to before." His job in radio had long felt transactional; these days it's more collaborative. "It's not like 'I'll play your record and my job here is done,' " he explains, taking a deep breath before rattling off one of the many mile-a-minute riffs he'll deliver today. "It's more like 'Do you want me to play your record? Do you want me to get it onto playlists? Do you want to start there and work it up to here? When do you want Beats 1 support? Do you want it at the start? Do you want it after three months? How do you want to guide yourself?' "

This cosy relationship with artists tends to rile Lowe's critics. He has long been accused of being every artist's biggest fan, some might propose that, in this way, he's not all that dissimilar to Jimmy Fallon. Then again, Lowe, like Fallon, has seen show business from both sides. Not many people are aware that Lowe is a Grammy-nominated songwriter who wrote for Sam Smith's debut album. He's also a beatmaker and was, for the better part of the 18 years he lived in London, a regular presence in nightclub DJ booths. "I could never be a critic," he contends. "I just couldn't. I couldn't sit there and go, 'That's an atrocious effort. Terrible collection of songs.' Being a musician is my primary passion and my strength, but it's also a weakness in some people's eyes that I can't sit there and be more critical over things they think are just undeniably shit."

Earlier this year, Lowe interviewed Justin Timberlake and gushed over his new album, Man of the Woods, just before the critical establishment almost unanimously trashed it. "As a fan of that record, I don't question my taste," he says. "I believe what I believe, or I wouldn't have said it. I feel bad for him because I'm as big a fan of him as anybody. But Justin's a big boy; he can forge his own path."

His longtime friend Mark Ronson tells me, "Zane is highly intuitive and sensitive to humanity and understands what it takes to be an artist." And, the music producer adds, "while he might not make you like a shitty song, his enthusiasm for it certainly gets you 20 to 30 percent more hyped on it."

At the outset of today's show, Lowe is doing his best to prove Ronson's point. "One song! One headline! Right around the world! Right around the clock for the next 24! Into all your playlists! You add it! You share it! You keep it moving! This one is huge!" The song in question? Imagine Dragons' new single "Next to Me." "This is a pensive and beautiful record," Lowe tells the band's lead singer, Dan Reynolds, via a FaceTime call.

If Lowe is sympathetic to artists, it's because he understands how personal music can be. Beneath the affable but deliberate surface, it's clear that Lowe doesn't simply enjoy music; he needs it.

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The show concludes, as it always does, promptly at 11 AM. Not long after, Lowe hops into the backseat of a chauffeured golf cart and heads a few blocks down the pedestrian-filled business-park road to a coffee shop. He sits at a small curbside table and removes his black sunglasses. An order of braised cabbage arrives, and Lowe takes up the subject of music as therapy. Music, he tells me, prevents him from sinking into his ever-present anxiety and intermittent depression. It "keeps me focused on something I love and not drifting off into outer space. So I could be having a terrible day," and then, after perhaps talking up a new song, interviewing an artist he loves or simply gabbing about anything related to music, "that can turn my whole day around. All of a sudden that little seed of doubt, that little thing that's been attacking me, it's gone — or at least way further away than it was before."

Lowe admits he misses the rush of creating and performing music. During his years at the BBC, he'd go to the recording studio every morning to work on music, tape his show and then go out and play the clubs. But his job at Apple is more demanding. Last night, he deejayed a stuffy corporate magazine party, but gigs like those are becoming a rarity. When he moved to the US to work for Apple, he made a personal pledge. "Let's just focus on the show and make sure it works."

Still, even when he's off the air or taking a rare vacation, his obsession is right there. "I find it really hard to switch off," Lowe says. "If my brain's active, I'm probably thinking about something to do with music. I get restless if I'm not doing something with music — manipulating it or creating with it, thinking >>

about it, making a playlist, setting something up. I find it really hard to not consistently check on the algorithm of life."

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Lowe was fixated on music from an early age. He grew up in Auckland, the second of two sons. His father, Derek, was one of the original directors of Radio Hauraki, the first station to break the New Zealand government's then monopoly on broadcasting by operating illegally off the coast in the process coining the term pirate radio. "And you can be sure my mom was down at the dock with him," he adds of Liz Lowe. "It's sort of the apple-doesn't-fall-far-from-the-tree scenario," he says with a laugh. As a young child, he would stack cardboard boxes in his basement, wield a pair of chopsticks and imagine he was Led Zeppelin drummer John Bonham. He played in bands as a teenager and was a member of an electronic trio called Breaks Co-Op. "But then I started to become older and realised I wanted some money; I wanted some independence," he says. Recognising a desire to work in music, Lowe took a job presenting music videos on the local Max TV. In 1997 he relocated to the UK. There, he hosted XFM's Music Response, and after landing an on-camera job on MTV2, he was hired by the BBC. Early in his decade-long stint at Radio 1, Lowe became a star. Here was that rare DJ whose word and taste carried so much weight he could single-handedly drive a song up the charts. Ronson recalls "the power and the trustworthiness" Lowe built with his audience at Radio 1, "and how he could make the entire country interested in a song." Metallica drummer Lars Ulrich, whom Lowe invited to host his own Beats 1 show, calls him "the coolest motherf#cker in the room, on the air, anywhere, really." As an artist, Ulrich describes interviews with Lowe as "a clear highlight in between the rest of the promotional grind. It was always very energetic and it moved fast. It was like, Whoa, there's a lot of enthusiasm and energy coming my way!" In late 2014, when Apple began courting him, Lowe already sensed his time at the BBC might have run its course. "I was always determined to control my exit. I didn't want to be shown the door," he says. In Iovine's telling, he and his team at the then fledgeling Apple Music noticed that Lowe was "constantly interested in what's happening tomorrow. That was very attractive to us." So in February 2015, after getting the official green light from his wife, Kara, and informing his sons, Lowe announced he was leaving Radio 1 and heading to Apple. He has been an Angeleno for three years now, and though he enjoys spending time with his family in their Hollywood Hills home, he admits that adjusting hasn't always been easy. He misses London. "It's forever a part of who we are as people and a family and me as a person. "But when I came to America," Lowe continues, "I just spent the first three to six months going, 'Oh my God. I can finally just play rap music really loud in my car and it doesn't feel strange!' "

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When I call Lowe one week after my visit to the studio, I find he's come down with a bad flu. He's been thinking about our previous discussion and the role his anxiety plays in his obsession with music.

"I'm always looking for something that's going to keep me rooted in a good moment — something that I can focus on that's going to allow me to achieve a real value," he says. "Because otherwise I can spiral off into a lot of what-ifs. What if the world comes to an end?"

As Beats 1 and Lowe's role at Apple evolve, the DJ says he's continually gaining more clarity about why he is indeed the right man for the job. He has come to the conclusion that hosting a show, interviewing artists and even the idea of a 24-hour streaming radio station are all rooted in his desire to feel less alone.

"And making music is an extension of that philosophy," he says. "Like, I'm not alone, and if you're listening to this, neither are you. Ultimately, as people, we're just trying to reach out a hand to one another and say, 'Life is a scary thing from the minute you're born, but we're here to do the best we can at connecting with one another.' "

Lowe pauses and adds, "I like the sense that we're all in this together." ■

"I'M NOT ALONE, AND IF YOU'RE LISTENING TO THIS, NEITHER ARE YOU."

Pressly
Ann
TRUC TROUNG
JESTON BRANDO
NELLY MADUNA

Tell us something surprising about you?
I have a college education and a fulltime career working with special needs children

Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?
I was very excited to shoot for Playboy I've had multiple publications with them and get excited for every shoot.

What inspires you?
Money

What are some of your hobbies?
Dancing, working out, paddle boarding, and shopping (if that can be counted as a hobby)

Which song is absolutely certain to make you cry whenever you hear it?
My Little Girl by Tim McGraw
What is your favourite word in any language and what does it mean?
Bella, it means beautiful in Italian.

Turn-ons
A man who is established, educated, humble, and takes care of his appearance

Turn-offs
Cockiness, laziness, and being messy

Describe to us your perfect date
This sounds cliché, but I would enjoy an expensive romantic candlelit dinner followed by a walk along the beach.

Which world capital would you most like to visit, and why?
Rome. I am fascinated by the globally influential art and architecture it has to offer. It would be a dream come true to set foot inside the Vatican or Sistine Chapel

Any last words you would like to share with the readers?
Thank you for being a reader, follower, or fan. I appreciate you all more than you could ever imagine.

SURVIVING THE
DARIÉN GAP

"If you perish in the jungle, what would you like us to do with your remains?"

The question comes from Simon Edwards, whom I met three minutes ago. "The rest of us already talked about it," he goes on, "and we're just going to leave any bodies in there." I tell him I need an hour or two to think about it. He shrugs and launches into a rundown of his "trauma bag": sutures and staples, four eye patches; combat gauze with a hemostatic agent for quicker blood clotting, six litres of IV fluid; intravenous steroids, antihistamines and antibiotics; scalpels; and a chest seal for stabbings that puncture a lung. The bright-eyed 54-year-old veteran and physician's assistant, who has sutured at least four scrotums in his career, spent 20 years in the Special Forces as a medic in more than 10 countries, and apparently he can't help getting excited at the prospect of using all this stuff again.

We're standing in the backyard of a Panama City hostel called Casa Nativa, where shirtless European backpackers sway in nearby hammocks, smoking cigarettes and watching, perplexed, as these middle-aged Americans in flip-flops prepare for some kind of war. On a picnic bench behind Edwards, 43-year-old Wayne Mitchell, the expedition's hawk-faced leader, discusses logistics with our French fixer, who is describing the dead bodies of undocumented migrants he's seen on the trail in the past year.

Mitchell is also a 20-year Army veteran, having served as a platoon leader in Iraq and an urban combat advisor in Mongolia. He, Edwards and two other vets – Mike Eastham, a 50-year-old bearded and tattooed curmudgeon who was twice deployed to Iraq and served as an advisor in Mongolia with Mitchell, and 59-year-old Rich Doering, a retired satellite-systems engineer and Army airborne officer – are two months into the first-ever continuous motorcycle journey from Deadhorse in Prudhoe Bay, Alaska to Ushuaia, Argentina. Their route includes the roadless, lawless jungle known as the Darién Gap, the only break in the 30 000km Pan-American Highway system. Driving this course in its entirety is the holy grail of overland motorist expeditions, but almost everyone settles for a Caribbean boat ride that circumvents the 130km snarl of jungle. Only a handful of motorists have ever made it through the Gap, and none has completed the whole Alaska-to-Argentina journey in one straight shot.

Becoming the first group to do this is their mission – and the premise of their largely self-funded documentary, >>

Top: Entering the Darién Gap. Bottom: Pizarro and Mitchell in Yaviza, Panama.

Where the Road Ends, which is being filmed by by 24-year-old Iraq veteran and combat cameraman Jake Hamby.

Mitchell has been going crazy at his National Park Service office job "like a border collie in an apartment," he says. Edwards is on the run from a broken heart back home in Colorado, and the other guys just seem to have the time. Below the surface, however, there's a sense that these men are out to redefine the image of the modern-day veteran. "I don't want the pinnacle of my life to be my early military career," Edwards later says from the passenger seat of their 22-foot support van. "I can't stand going into the VFW with soggy old guys sucking down cheap beers, talking about the war days." He's not a fan of charities like Wounded Warrior Project, which helps reintegrate veterans into society and provides a range of support programs. "If you're waiting around for the government or whoever to take you on a fishing trip and make you feel better, it's not gonna happen," he says.

The team rejects the common notion that all veterans are screwed-up, dysfunctional victims incapable of living happy postwar lives. "Among the veteran community there's this idea that if you don't have severe PTSD, then you didn't serve hard enough," says Hamby. But they also want to distance themselves from the growing crop of tatted blowhards hamming it up for their YouTube channels — toting guns in their living rooms, scarfing MREs and dissing liberals while flanked by women in American-flag bikinis. Somewhere between these extremes are four men about to enter one of the most dangerous patches on the planet.

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The Darién region is a haven for drug smugglers, banditos, paramilitary forces and undocumented migrants on desperate and often fatal passages to the United States. Not far from the Colombian village of Cristales, a backpacker was shot execution-style in 2013. A journalist and two backpackers crossing through the Arquía area were kidnapped for 10 days in 2003. And a few years before that, a local farmer in the riverside village of Bijao was decapitated in a violent operation of mass displacement; his paramilitary killers played soccer with his head. And those are just the human dangers. In the mountainous ravines smothered with dank vegetation and under a canopy of trees so dense it's hard to see more than a few feet beyond your machete — poisonous spiders, frogs, scorpions, plants and snakes share one of the wettest climates on earth. The Darién Gap has been regarded as cursed ever since the Spanish explorer Vasco Núñez de Balboa first set foot on the Isthmus of Panama in 1513. Early explorers were beheaded by subordinates, killed by mysterious diseases and driven to delirious starvation after 49 days of wandering in circles. Motorcyclists attempting to cross the Gap have faced mechanical snafus, suffered severe infections and broken bones or been turned around by Senafront, Panama's border police force. Just as ubiquitous as these catastrophes is a collective obsession that keeps these fools coming back for more.

• • •

The Darién Gap doesn't feel like such a scary place when, after driving from Panama City to Yaviza and then travelling two days by river deep into the jungle, we nose our dugout canoes (called piraguas) up to the banks of the brown Paya River and are greeted by two dozen boys in rubber boots and soccer jerseys. These young, genial Guna Indians, all of them short, with close-cropped hair and wearing gold chains, wave and cheer like a fan club. As the riders prepare to unload their 2017 Kawasaki KLR 650s, they realise that this gaggle of youngsters is the team of porters our Paya-born Guna guide, Isaac Pizarro, has hired for us. We drag the bikes ashore and into a wall of sugarcane, the stalks towering 10 feet overhead. The sky disappears above us. We begin our slide down the throat of the jungle. The riders are on their bikes by 7:17AM, motoring through the sugarcane where the porters have begun to machete a narrow path. The unassisted riding lasts about 200 yards before we're stopped at the foot of a steep, muddy hill. "Five more minutes, then all tranquilo," says

THERE'S A SENSE THAT THESE MEN ARE OUT TO REDEFINE THE MODERN DAY VETERAN.

Pizarro, making a downhill motion with his hand and a quick, emphatic whoosh sound. He barely finishes this sentence when rain begins to pour through the trees

Drenched within minutes, Mitchell tries to gun it up the hill in first gear, revving hard and almost toppling over before jumping off to the bike's side. He keeps giving it gas while pushing the handlebars, spinning the rear tire and kicking up mud as six boys run over to help push and pull the bike uphill. "Allez! Allez!" they yell, cheering and clapping when he tops out. Edwards goes next and does the same, followed by Eastham, who leans hard on the throttle without getting off the bike, then Doering, who stalls immediately, dismounts and lets the boys push it up the rest of the hill

As the slowest and most timid rider, Doering has struggled to keep up with the group since Alaska. Now, with no road to speak of, he can barely get over a root without stalling. "Rich, I know it's hard, man, but you've gotta keep forward momentum," says Mitchell with the patience of a father of two. Under his breath he adds, "We should have reconned further yesterday. It just keeps going up."

After a few more hills, our hired help disappears. We figure some are up ahead stashing the food and backpacks at a lunch spot, but as I hike past the bikes and crest the next plateau, I see 12 of them helping themselves to our bag of Panamanian hard candy.

To catch the Darién Gap's short dry season, from January to February, the Where the Road Ends crew left their starting position in Alaska on November 11 — an extremely cold and blustery time to be driving from Prudhoe Bay. But just our luck, the Darién region will receive five times more rainfall the week of the expedition than the previous two years combined. It has been pouring every night for seven days, and the jungle floor is an endless puddle of thick, sloppy mud. The tire knobs are caked slick, and the space between the rear wheel and the swing arm of each bike is fully packed with debris. With this added resistance, the riders redline the rpms while feathering the clutch to get some traction. They stop every 15 minutes to clean mud and leaves out of the wheel wells with sticks.

We're only two hours in when Doering burns out his clutch. Edwards and Eastham spend an hour taking the transmission apart to find the clutch fibres worn down to nothing. Farther ahead, Mitchell is rallying the other three bikes up a series of longer, steeper hills. The heat coming off each motorcycle is scorching as the engine temperatures push 240 degrees Fahrenheit, they usually don't exceed 190

The porters stop working at four PM on the dot and begin hacking out a clearing for camp. We string up hammocks while they make beds out of banana leaves and suspend mosquito netting. They prepare a vat of salty white rice and sardines while the team discusses the fate of Doering and his bike

"It really boils down to mission success," says Doering. "I don't want to keep going if I'm just going to take up space and resources without contributing." The other guys protest, but everyone, including Doering, seems relieved that this is the end of the road for him. There's no time to worry about retrieving his lifeless motorcycle from the jungle, though the locals seem eager to strip it for parts and souvenirs.

The next morning, Doering says a short goodbye and makes his way back to Panama City. Some of the porters head home too, having lost interest in the job. Eastham starts his bike at the bottom of a short incline and spends a few minutes struggling to get over some slick roots. Despite having more aptitude and less timidity than Doering, he got his motorcycle license only two weeks before the trip and may now be the weakest link, throttling heavily and spraying mud into the porters' faces. Out of breath and softly telling the others to go ahead, he stops to rest his head in his hands

Edwards's and Mitchell's bikes quickly overheat too. As they cool down, Edwards checks his odometer. They're only 2km from the river where they unloaded.

The farther we get from the Paya, the thicker the jungle becomes. Small snakes slither away from our commotion. Scorpions have taken a liking to crawling inside our backpacks. Ravines cut by the rainy season's heavy flooding are getting deeper and steeper, the banks too challenging to walk up, let alone push a motorcycle over. "Let's stop trying the bikes and use some mechanical advantage," Eastham suggests. They rig a 50-metre steel cable above the ravine with a three-quarter-ton hand crank, hoist the bikes up one at a time, then zip-line them across to the other side. It's time-consuming but a welcome break from the slog.

After one and a half days of dragging, pushing, pulling, hoisting and zipping bikes across brutal terrain, Pizarro tells us the boys have had their fill. They give us a few high fives before vanishing into the bush with a handwritten note to Doering detailing our mechanical predicament — that all three remaining bikes have burned-out clutches and will need to be dragged the rest of the way. Supposedly some new porters are coming over from Colombia tomorrow.

After hiking ahead to the next plateau, we make camp under a cuipo tree that's 12 feet in diameter. Mitchell rummages through the pile of white trash bags containing our supplies, but he can't find any of the sardines, bananas, candy or pasta. Only a few cans of Spam are left, along Wounaan porters dish up a mid-day meal, with a couple bags of >>

Wounaan porters dish up a midday meal

rice, lentils and salt. As the others prepare to hack through the thick curtain of vines to clear some hammock space, they realise all but one of their machetes is gone, along with three pairs of riding gloves, several cans of bug spray, matches, a spool of 550 cord and a pair of boots. The Guna Indians practice communal living with hardly any possessions, which is beautiful in its own way but doesn't instil in them much concept of personal property. "We should have brought a lockbox," says Mitchell.

Low on supplies and lugging lifeless bikes is not how the team envisioned their great quest playing out, but by now we all know that nothing goes as planned in the Darien Gap. We have no idea where we are or how much farther it is to Colombia, and Pizarro's estimates turn on themselves every time we ask.

To me, nobody seems as worried as he should be. Why hadn't they thought to replace the clutch plates after riding 16 000 kilometres, including 640km on Alaska's wind-hammered Dalton Highway, before attempting to ride through the untamed jungle? How about a jumper pack or some spare parts? I thought one of the first rules of military survival is to take care of your feet, yet Mitchell has agonising blisters from a sockless recon mission in wet rubber boots the day before we left Paya. These guys have operated in wild places with comparably horrific environmental conditions, but without the organisational structure, hierarchical chain of command and robust resources of the military, are they capable of pulling off a mission of this magnitude?

I'm reminded once again that they are walking rejections of vet clichés. Still, they could at least keep better track of their essential equipment. When I look down at my pack's hip belt, I realise my only knife is gone.

• • •

On our third day in the jungle, it pours rain for hours before daybreak, making the mud even deeper and slipperier. Mosquitoes taking shelter from the rain feast on our flesh through the underside of our hammocks, where there's no bug netting. The 27 new Colombian porters show up two hours late and promptly commence an hour-long breakfast production of rice, plantains and charred river turtle. Mostly members of the Wounaan tribe, they look older, stronger and more serious than the Gunas. One has a Latin Kings gang tattoo on his neck. Another has a vicious scar on his face and a white, blind eyeball.

When we approach an Africanised "killer" bees' nest the size of an oil drum wrapped around a tree, the Wounaan bull-rush through the swarm, yelling, "Vay! Vamos a Colombia!" Eastham hangs back, having developed a bee allergy during jungle-warfare training in this area 25 years ago. Mitchell seizes the opportunity to call Eastham a pussy; Eastham retorts with a comment about Mitchell's intolerance for iodine water treatment. The guys are never too worn down to trade casually emasculating jabs, the kind shared only by close friends who have been through hell together. They also commiserate over the tedious bureaucracies of military administration and swap stories about the tangles of family life — of missing births while on deployment and coming home after nine months to a newly spouseless house.

The following day, we reach a sunny hilltop clearing where a white stone obelisk — Palo de las Letras — marks the Panamanian-Colombian border. The air smells sweeter here; then again, we've barely seen the sky in three days. It's a rare moment of triumph for the team to reach this landmark and finally have a sense of measurable distance. The Wounaan celebrate by using leaves to funnel our Gatorade powder into their bottles of river water. Senafront soldiers emerge from the bush to congratulate us and pose for group photos — but also to remind us that we're on our own once we cross into Colombia.

The ground is firmer on the Colombian side, and the mud quickly dries in the spokes of each bike. We start to see piles of discarded boots and sweatshirts, presumably from migrants trying to shed weight from their already meagre belongings. Two emaciated dogs with open wounds on their faces have been following us, and they suddenly take off barking into the woods. "Jaguars," says one of the Wounaan.

After another day and a half of relentless uphill and downhill schlepping between 11 river crossings, we're getting close to the confluence with the Cacarica River, where we'll load up the bikes and begin our jungle departure through fast-moving rapids in tiny, overloaded piraguas. Despite having miles of river and ocean and an entire continent left to cross, the team glows with pride at having tackled the bulk of the Darién Gap with motorcycles, a historic feat even if they Edwards and Mitchell navigate a rare section of jungle where riding with minimal assistance is possible. did end up dragging the

Edwards and Mitchell navigate a rare section of jungle where riding with minimal assistance is possible

WE HAVE NOWHERE TO STAY, NO MORE FOOD AND A STORM MASSING AT THE SKYLINE.

Top: Senafront soldiers, Wounaan people and the team pose at Palo de las Letras. Bottom, Mitchell and Edwards work their way down the Cacarica River

bikes most of the way. Stoic as they all are, the men give off a glow of camaraderie and a sense of team accomplishment — something they've known for most of their adult lives in the military. Facing a death-defying task, relying on one another to execute it and acting like it was just another day on the job are the things so many veterans struggle to replicate in the workplace, with family and in the rest of their daily civilian lives.

But in the Gap, as in war, as soon as you think things are looking up, the fates decide they're not quite ready to stop f#cking with you.

• • •

We pull into the river village of Cristales, where locals shepherd us into an open-air hut and immediately start arguing with Pizarro. Squealing naked children play soccer and hopscotch in the dirt, but adults keep their distance and stare from the dark doorways of unlit shacks, visibly uncomfortable with the presence of six American gringos in their village. We hear the 20-horsepower motor of a piragua taking five men downriver to inform the local paramilitaries of our arrival. "Very dangerous. Very bad," Pizarro whispers in Spanish. He cocks his arms as if holding a large gun and jerks it upward to mimic the powerful kickback. "Boom! Boom! Paramilitaries maybe 30 minutes from here. I want to go right now."

As we wait to see how the paramilitary authority will receive our unexpected arrival on their turf, the veterans hide their military IDs in their shoes and discuss a plan of action in the event that things get spicy. "I'll trade 'em two pulleys and a punch in the mouth for a boat ride out of here," says Eastham.

Just then, we get an inReach text from Doering saying he has Kawasaki in the US overnighting three new clutch packs to Panama, which he'll deliver to us in Colombia. Now we just have to make it out of here. Word from the paramilitary arrives. They will allow us to stay the night as long as we're gone by dawn, but we still have to float downriver through several of their jungle outposts.

The next morning, our attention turns to the narrow waterway's transition into a dark swamp. The riverbanks are gone, replaced with thick mangroves in murky water that gets too shallow for our cargo load. On guard for freshwater stingrays, we wade knee-deep as black palm needles work their way into our boots. The Wounaan lift, push and pull the boats over fallen logs, and a barefoot teenager spends 30 minutes with a Stihl MS 660 chainsaw, going to work on a mass of trees blocking our path. So of course we think we're home free seven hours later when the swamp opens up to the larger Atrato River, which is hundreds of yards wide and has large ships puttering up and down it. We just have to abandon our fleet of three piraguas for an 18-foot skiff to carry the three motorcycles, all our gear, our six guys plus Pizarro and five more local helpers who all smell like booze.

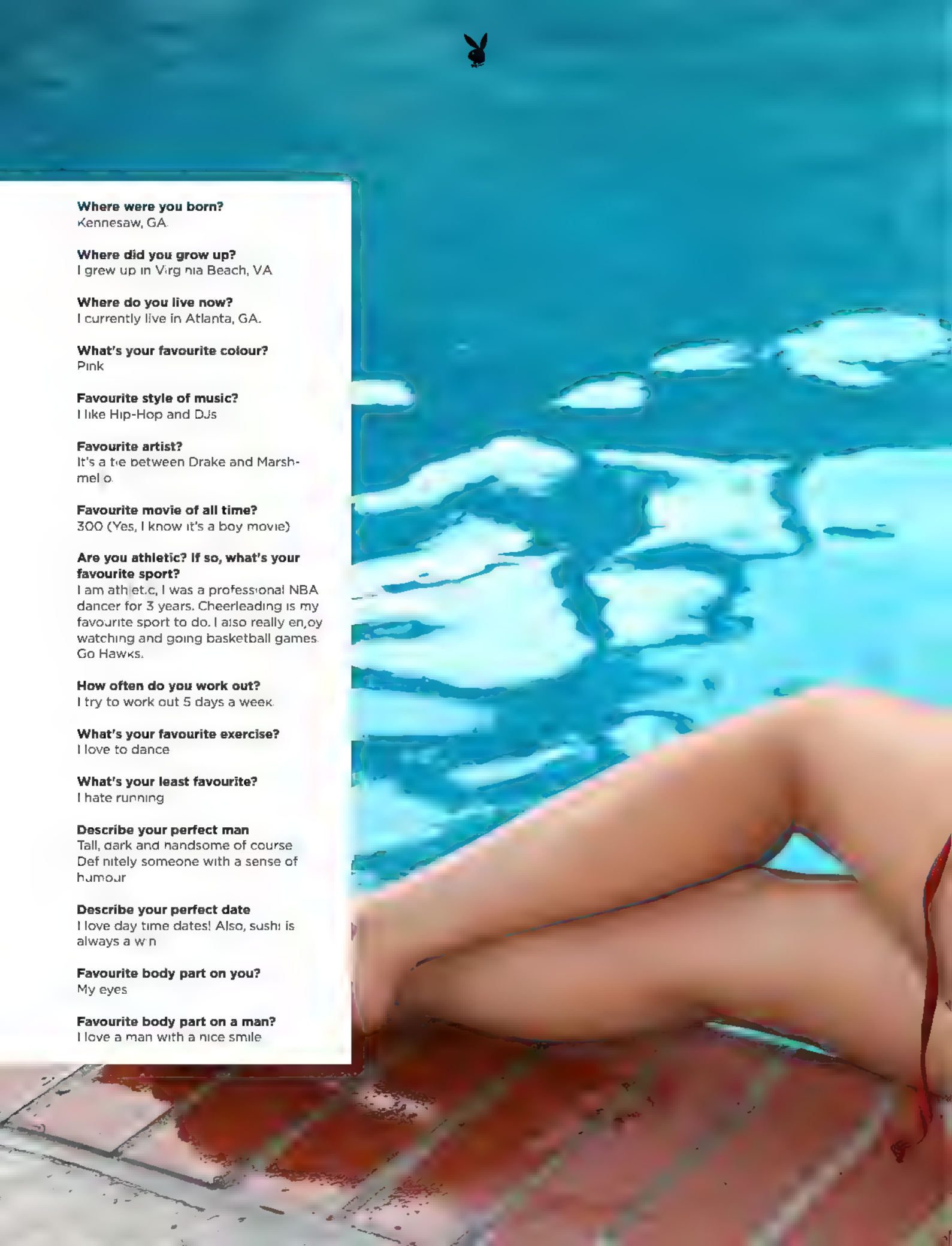
The sun sets on us as we make a run for the port city of Turbo, where the team hopes to get the bikes running again and reunite with their support van before continuing on the journey south. We stop for gas in a floating pirate village where two Colombian military boats are parked, loaded to the gills with ammunition and 50-calibre gunners. The commander is refusing to let us cross the ocean bay to get to Turbo at night, but we have nowhere to stay, no more food and a storm massing at the skyline. After much of our pleading and pestering in bad Spanish, a younger military official scrawls something on a scrap of paper, presumably absolving them of all liability. We have no idea what it actually says, but we sign it anyway and take off.

Under a Cheshire cat moon and advancing clouds, we crash through open water. The boat lurches as we grip the motorcycles to keep them from tipping over. Everyone is silent. Eight days have passed since we entered the jungle. They may have made history, surviving the Darién Gap at its worst, but at this moment everyone is focused on staying out of the dark, violent water. There are more rivers, more mountains to come. I can't help feeling this is a high-stakes covert military operation, only there's no backup and nobody has any idea where we are. The fear and uncertainty are palpable. That's exactly what they came for.

At press time, the Where the Road Ends crew was still on the road, headed south through Chile. Their film is slated to premiere in 2019.

Mary Michael O'Sullivan

Photography by **ARTHUR ST. JOHN** *Text by* **NELLY MADUNA**
Hair & Make-up **ARYANNA E. MARTIN FOR NARS**



Where were you born?
Kennesaw, GA.

Where did you grow up?
I grew up in Virginia Beach, VA

Where do you live now?
I currently live in Atlanta, GA.

What's your favourite colour?
Pink

Favourite style of music?
I like Hip-Hop and DJs

Favourite artist?
It's a tie between Drake and Marshmello.

Favourite movie of all time?
300 (Yes, I know it's a boy movie)

Are you athletic? If so, what's your favourite sport?
I am athletic, I was a professional NBA dancer for 3 years. Cheerleading is my favourite sport to do. I also really enjoy watching and going basketball games. Go Hawks.

How often do you work out?
I try to work out 5 days a week.

What's your favourite exercise?
I love to dance

What's your least favourite?
I hate running

Describe your perfect man
Tall, dark and handsome of course. Definitely someone with a sense of humour

Describe your perfect date
I love day time dates! Also, sushi is always a win

Favourite body part on you?
My eyes

Favourite body part on a man?
I love a man with a nice smile

Any pet peeves?
I don't like it when people are on their phone at dinner. Especially if we are on a date!

Tell us something about you not too many people know.
I have dual citizenship Ireland & USA

If you can change anything about you, what would it be?
I wish I was taller

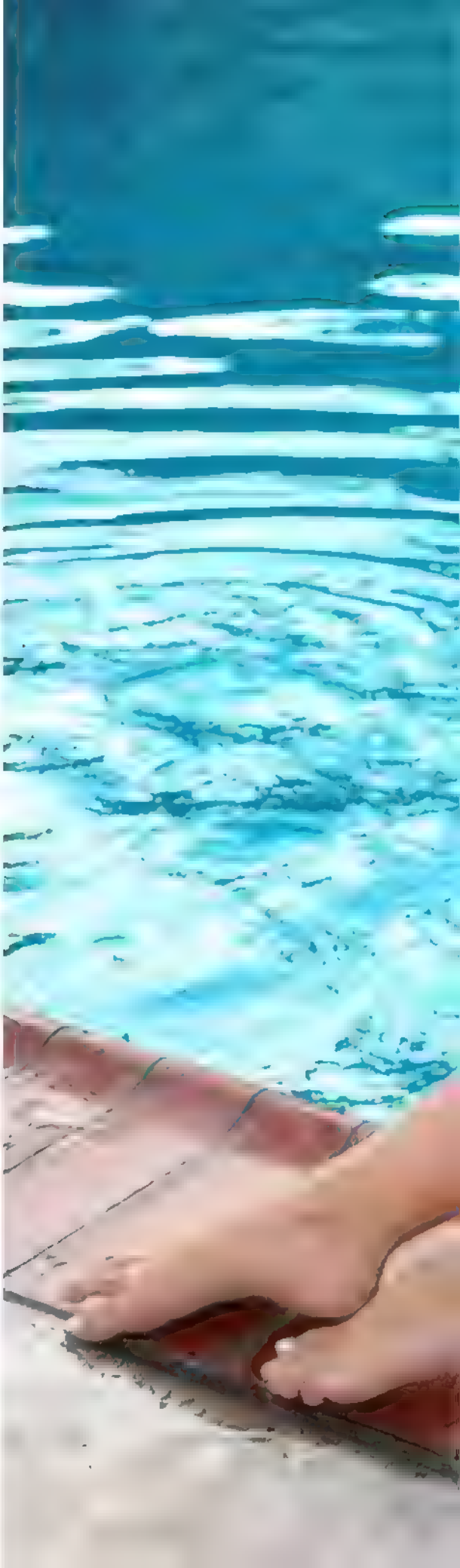
Do you like to travel?
I love to travel!

Where is your favourite vacation destination?
My favourite place I've ever been is Ireland.

What would you consider to be your biggest challenge as a model so far?
My biggest challenge as a model has been my height and weight. I am shorter and curvier than many other swimsuit models But I have found my niche and it has made me learn to appreciate myself and my body as it is

You're officially a Playboy cover model, what does this mean to you?
I am so excited to be a part of the Playboy family! This is something I have wanted to do for a long time and it took a lot of work so I am ecstatic to have finally accomplished my goal.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?
I see myself married with 5 kids Yes, I said 5! I am an only child so having a big family is important to me



BETTE

R MAN

Blazer and shirt by **David Hart**, trousers and shoes by **Salvatore Ferragamo**

Leon Bridges opens his new album, Good Thing, with the deceptively simple line "I better slow down." The 28-year-old Fort Worth native's life has indeed been moving at a breakneck pace. In the span of two years he went from dishwasher to Grammy nominee. He kicked off his career — and a major-label bidding war — with the elegiac single "Coming Home." His 2015 debut album of the same name reverently evokes Sam Cooke and Otis Redding, but his sophomore set, out May 4 on Columbia, is richer and more ambitious, full of musings on his parents' migration across the South. Bridges conjures postwar American culture in his style as well as in the studio. He's given to slim suits and polished leather shoes, even if he still harbours memories of the fitted-cap collection he amassed in high school. When PLAYBOY caught up with him, he was in Shreveport, Louisiana, preparing for a show — still for a moment.

What do you find so compelling about mid-century American style?

It's a powerful statement to dress that way because it's not common for a black man to do that kind of fashion. And for me, I think it was just a great time; I love the high-waisted pants. So much care went into certain styles back then.

Fashion-wise, what are people doing better today than back then?

I love that style, but I'm not stuck in the past. I'm also inspired by A$AP Rocky, Lil Uzi Vert and those guys. You can take stuff from the past but also combine it with modern things.

What kind of fashion phases did you go through in high school?

I graduated in 2007, so the big thing back then was tall tees and faded baggy jeans — and, you know, Filas. [laughs] My style has definitely evolved.

How did growing up in the South influence the way you dress today?

One thing I take from the South is the whole country-western look. You've got guys wearing bolo ties and Stetsons and Western shirts. I like to incorporate that.

A lot of contemporary R&B is minimalist — sort of cool and steely — but Good Thing is full and lush. Where did you draw inspiration from this time?

Man, all that's just from the influences I've gathered on my journey. You can point out guys like R Kelly, Usher and Townes Van Zandt that I pull inspiration from. A lot of R&B today feels, to me, kind of shallow — but it all sounds good.

How Can I Tell
Mom & Dad

Sweater by **A.P.C.**, shirt by **3.1 Phillip Lim**, trousers by **Death to Tennis**, shoes by **Dsquared2**, socks by **The Sock Man NYC**

I wanted to make music that's intentional. Good Thing is a diverse album, but it's not a huge, conceptual thing. It's just my experiences with relationships and songs of triumph, and my narrative.

You made the album with Ricky Reed, who's known for producing pop hits for the likes of Twenty One Pilots and Meghan Trainor. What drew you to him?

A story about that. Before we made this album we collaborated on a DeJ Loaf song — she's from Detroit, an amazing rapper. In that session he was able to push me to record a vocal that was not really in my register. I felt if he could push me out of my comfort zone, he could bring me into something new for this project. It was super collaborative; he's a real musician. He could have made Coming Home Part Two if he wanted to, but our goal was to make something fresh.

Has the Trump administration made you reconsider the role of an artist in society?

It definitely has made me rethink my role as a musician, and I think it's on us to speak on those things when it's the right time. But I don't want to just throw that in a song and rush it; I want it to be organic — for it to make sense and still be a good song at the end of the day. But honestly, I don't even think about Trump. What I think about is how I can better myself and be impactful to somebody else, to people in my neighbourhood. That's the only way it's gonna get done.

On the last song from Good Thing you sing about being a kid in school, and then you say, "I fell short of what true blackness was." What made you feel that way?

It was definitely my peers in high school. I feel like this is still something that's happening, not living up to the standard of what a "true black person" should be. Growing up, if you don't meet that certain standard — if you're not hood enough or ghetto enough, or if you have the desire to better yourself — you're white. That's kind of what I dealt with, and with not really being comfortable with my own self and identity.

Have you found some sort of resolution with those feelings?

Definitely. I'm comfortable not looking like everybody else. That's something I've been growing into, loving myself. It has been a struggle as a musician, and not being a person who has a perfect look. But I've definitely been growing to loving myself and being comfortable in my own skin. ■

Hellboy: Return of the Lambton Worm

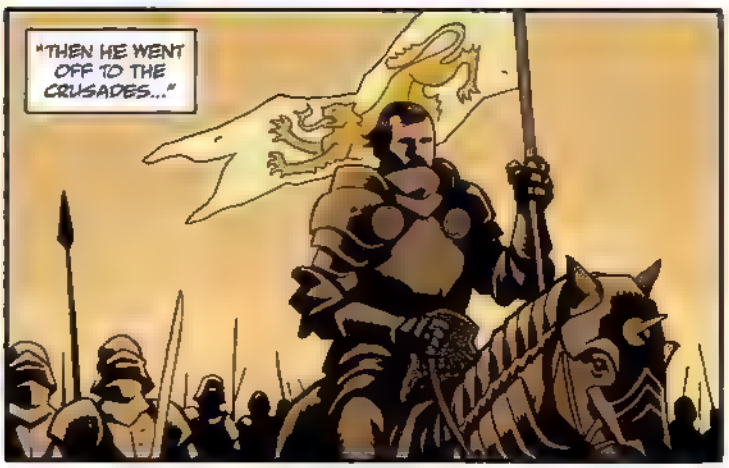
STORY: MIKE MIGNOLA

ART: BEN STENBECK

COLOR: DAVE STEWART

LETTERS: CLEM ROBINS

WORM?
JUST ANOTHER WORD FOR DRAGON.
IT'S TRUE.
OLD JOHN LAMBTON WAS SUPPOSED TO BE IN CHURCH, BUT HE WENT FISHING INSTEAD AND CAUGHT SOMETHING LIKE AN EEL. HE TOLD PEOPLE HE'D CAUGHT THE DEVIL AND THREW IT INTO A WELL...
BPRD



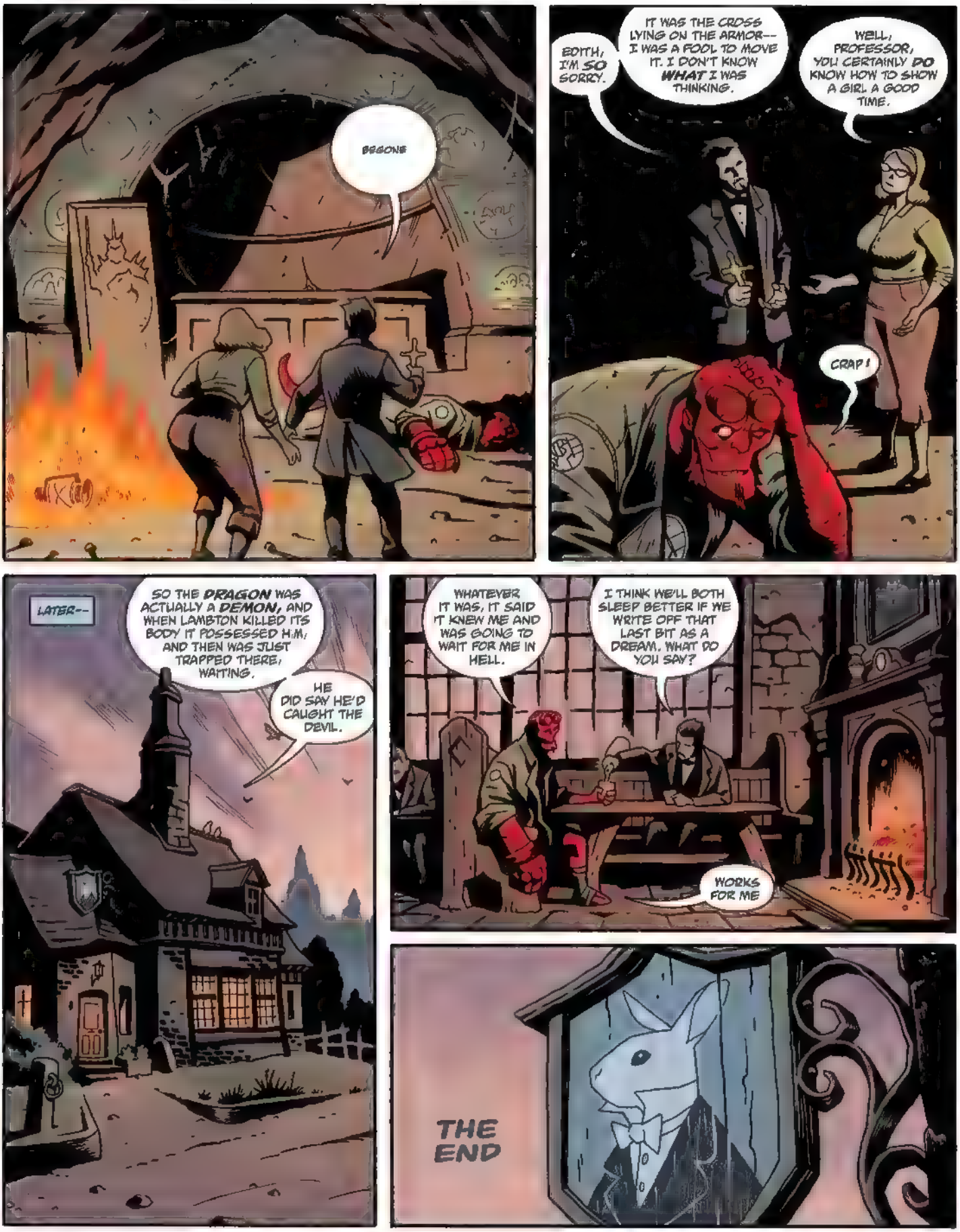
WHILE HE WAS GONE THE THING GREW TO BE HUGE, CRAWLED UP OUT OF THE WELL, AND TOOK TO TERRORIZING THE COUNTRYSIDE--EATING UP THE CATTLE, CHILDREN, CRUSHING ALL THE SOLDIERS SENT TO KILL IT...

PRETTY MUCH THE USUAL STUFF. WHEN LAMBTON CAME HOME AND FOUND WHAT WAS GOING ON HE HAD A SUIT OF ARMOR MADE WITH SPIKES, SO WHEN THE WORM TRIED TO CRUSH HIM IT WAS STABBED TO BITS AND DIED.
OF COURSE WE THOUGHT IT WAS JUST A STORY TILL WE FOUND THIS.
HOLY CRAP
BPRD

GOOD LORD. THIS LOOKS LIKE THE CROSS BISHOP LESLIE MENTIONS IN HIS LETTER TO—
RPR!
HISSS
AHHH
SWOK
SON OF A--
THUD
?
WHAT THE--?
FREEE. AT LAST.

HUAAAAA
AHHH
SORRY FOR THE BITING, BUT I WAS EXCITED AND DIDN'T RECOGNIZE YOU.
YOU DON'T.
OH, I DO.
SO NOW LET'S YOU AND I RUN RIOT. TEAR FLESH, BREAK BONES, WASH OURSELVES IN BLOOD...
JEBZ!
I DO MISS THE BLOOD. AND THE SCREAMING.
BOOM
SCREW YOU, PAL! I DON'T DO THAT STUFF!

YOU DO.
YOU WILL.
BROTHER, I KNOW YOU FOR WHAT YOU ARE.
SHUT UP!
BUT I WONDER-- HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN?
GO TO HELL!
AHHH
I COMMAND THEE, UNCLEAN SPIRIT--
I'LL GO...
I'LL WAIT FOR YOU THERE.
BPRD


BEGONE
EDITH, I'M SO SORRY.
IT WAS THE CROSS LYING ON THE ARMOR-- I WAS A FOOL TO MOVE IT. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WAS THINKING.
WELL, PROFESSOR, YOU CERTAINLY DO KNOW HOW TO SHOW A GIRL A GOOD TIME.
CRAP!
LATER--
SO THE DRAGON WAS ACTUALLY A DEMON, AND WHEN LAMBTON KILLED ITS BODY IT POSSESSED H.M. AND THEN WAS JUST TRAPPED THERE, WAITING.
HE DID SAY HE'D CAUGHT THE DEVIL.
WHATEVER IT WAS, IT SAID IT KNEW ME AND WAS GOING TO WAIT FOR ME IN HELL.
I THINK WE'LL BOTH SLEEP BETTER IF WE WRITE OFF THAT LAST BIT AS A DREAM. WHAT DO YOU SAY?
WORKS FOR ME
THE END

Alexis Johnson

Photography by **ARTHUR ST. JOHN** *Hair & Make up* **ARYANNA ESTHER MARTIN** *Text by* **NELLY MADUNA**

tion has overtaken you
is not common to man
God, and He will not
tation beyond your ability
to temptation He will also
the way of escape

I am a 35-year-old female from Harrisburg Pennsylvania. I was born and raised in Scranton, Pa, and I've travelled and lived all over the world. I'm currently a finance manager for a Nissan dealership and love to model on the side. I am also a fitness bodybuilder and look forward to compete again next year. Making Playboy was an all-time dream of mine, and I am honoured for this opportunity.

What most people don't know is that I am a published poet, a professional equestrian, I've lived in London, and also owned standardbred racehorses. But what most people really don't know is that I am in recovery from drugs and alcohol.

I was involved in a horrible car accident in 2008, and the death of my sister started doctor prescribed medication. However, I am currently 3 years clean from drugs and 9 years from alcohol. Today, I travel all over the country as a motivational and addiction awareness speaker. I do talks at conferences, hospitals, high schools and middle schools and try to educate and help prevent drug addiction before it starts.

I am turned on by men who take care of themselves but aren't too full of themselves. Fitness in a man is huge for me – I invest time in my health and look for someone who invests time in theirs as well. A sexy, white smile is also such a turn on for me.

A weird turn off if you must know are wires. I hate wires!!! They get tangled up and I have no patience to untangle them. I also don't like selfish people, it is such a turn off. I literally give away everything I have because I am blessed.

My goal is to become a full-time professional speaker. I want to travel and spread my message. I have invested all I own into this and can only hope one day my dream will become a reality. I have been to hell and back, and I hope to help others not suffer the same hell I have been through.

FICTION

Between the Records

Los Angeles, 1987 — trying to make beautiful music can get ugly

Dad and his new wife Elma were living in a one-bedroom apartment in Hollywood — mattress on the floor, filthy bathroom, clothes everywhere, dishes stacked in the sink. The front door opened onto a corridor overlooking a tiny fenced-in swimming pool. Don't go out onto Hollywood Boulevard, Dad warned Adam and me — too many junkies, muggers and prostitutes. The other tenants were a mixed bag of Sid-and-Nancys and Ike-and-Tinas. Dad said he and Elma didn't plan on staying long; they would get a proper apartment. You just couldn't beat that $125 weekly rate. And it was all they could afford now. In a few months he would start seeing royalty checks from his first record, which had just gone gold, but it took time for that money to funnel through all those pipes into his account. He said that the next time we came out to see him, we should expect to go to sleep to the sound of something other than alley cats in heat.

Dad spent the daytime hours behind the bedroom door, writing his second record. He didn't come out, not to eat or stretch his legs or say hello. He had a coffeemaker and perhaps a sandwich and a bottle of pills or a bag of blow in there with him. My brother and I would put our ears to the door and listen to him play. But to make sense of the still-unformed songs through the thick wood separating us was impossible. He was stopping and starting and picking up at odd places, rewriting words one moment and testing new melodies the next. I imagined his chest leaned over the curved upper half of his Gibson acoustic, his long black hair held back in a rubber band, a writing pad pinned between the guitar and his right thigh, his left hand up on the guitar neck, a pick between his teeth and a pen behind his ear and a tape recorder on the desk just in front of him. Every few minutes he moved from the chair to the windowsill, then to the bed and to the edge of the desk, before returning to the chair and scribbling down another line or two and crossing out others. He smoked a cigarette and listened back to the tape, recorded a new version of the same track and then moved on. At the end of a day he emerged looking worn-out, unwell.

This evening, after yet another full day of writing — his fourth since our arrival, five days ago — Dad went straight from the bedroom out the front door, had a swim, came back, showered, put on a bathrobe and then dropped down onto the couch and began staring at the television. He put his arm around my older brother.

"How's it going, Adam?"

"Mmm."

By **JULIAN TEPPER**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY **JEREMY ENECIO**

"Baby, we got to get down and make love tonight. I want to have a song on their desk by Monday."

"You're bored?" Dad said.

"Yeah."

"You too, Jules?"

"What?"

"You're bored too?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's great," he said. "So you're both bored."

Our attention shifted back to the television. Bugs Bunny. Dad, skinny and strung out, red-eyed, began accusing us of a failure of imagination. There was a pool outside, he shouted, the sun was shining. If he was our age, he would have spent the whole day in that pool, and he would have been happy about it too. Did we know what our problem was? We were spoiled. We got everything we wanted from our mother, and we didn't know how to appreciate anything.

Fortunately, Elina came out of the bathroom and started to defend us. "The kids just want to see you, Walter. They have a right to be upset. They came all this way."

"Give me a break! They are seeing me. Here I am." Dad held his hands out to the sides.

"They were in the pool all day. It's six o'clock," Elina said. "They want to do something else… something with their dad."

"I know, I know, you want to go spend my last hundred bucks on dinner, a dinner you won't even appreciate because you don't appreciate anything."

"Calm down. You're freaking out, and you're making things worse."

"Oh yeah, am I?"

"Just get out of here, Walter. Come back when you've pulled yourself together."

Dad only had to be told. He put on his leather jacket and slammed the door behind him without a word. Elina didn't run after him. She took a seat on one end of the couch, next to Adam, shaking her head. Her husband, our father, was crazy, she said. He had no self- control. He wasn't good at saying what he needed. It was idiotic, childish. Now he was out there on Hollywood Boulevard, furious, in pain.

Elina was 24, from Stockholm. She had been in the country just over two years and married to our father for seven months. They had met on the dance floor of an LA nightclub about a year ago, while Dad was out here recording his first album at the Capitol Records Building. On his return to New York, Mom had found Polaroids in Dad's suitcase — and with those photos, one marriage had ended, making room for the next. Elina's two front teeth, a gap between them, were set slightly forward because she still sucked her thumb. Her long blonde hair was swept into a ponytail; she had bangs. She wore a black T-shirt, sleeves torn off and bottom cut to expose her navel, her large chest bulging behind the dark fabric, and a pair of white underwear but no pants. She crossed her legs. Like our own mother, Elina didn't wear much around the home. And, as with our own mother, sometimes you had to look away. But now she was staring straight at us.

"He loves you guys. You know that, right? He feels bad that he can't spend more time with you. He doesn't want to fail you. So he gets upset when he sees you're not happy. And of course he feels a lot of pressure about the second record. He wants it to be great."

"I hate him," Adam said.

"No you don't," I told him. I didn't want to think it was possible.

"No, I really do. I hate him."

"Stop saying that," I said.

Just then, Dad returned. He didn't speak but stalked into the bedroom and swung the door shut. The tension in the dead-quiet room was enough to make me sick. I heard Dad's guitar knock against wood, perhaps the desk or a chair leg. He strummed for about 20 seconds before cursing. "F#ck! Unbelievable!"

I grimaced. Adam lowered his head. But Elina wasn't going to put up with this. She went into the bedroom, and then they were arguing. She said he had two minutes to pull it together or else she was sending us home to New York and she was going to a girlfriend's apartment for the rest of the week. But Dad was unreachable. He was shouting, as if he were trying to hit the back row of an arena with his voice, that we should go back to New York, and Elina should go to a girlfriend's apartment, and that that would be fine by him. To emphasise his point he kicked the bedroom door; we saw it shake from our seats on the couch. I could feel myself ready to cry, and I turned to my brother, saw the rage building behind his dark eyes.

He said, "Come on. Let's go."

I followed Adam down to the pool. We sat side by side on the diving board with our feet in the water and discussed going home early. Was it an option? Could we go? Tonight? What did it cost to change a plane ticket? Was Mom even in New York? Or was she away with her boyfriend? Maybe we could go to New Jersey and stay with Dad's parents. We couldn't remain here. That was impossible.

"We have to protect each other," I said.

"We will," my brother answered.

"Promise me."

"I promise."

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All of a sudden Billy appeared. Uncle Billy, we called him, Billy Andrews — long brown hair, light eyes, five o'clock shadow; he wore blue jeans and a brown suede vest with a white T-shirt underneath. He and our father were old friends, songwriting partners. Dad had played bass in Billy's band, and together they had written "Up in the Sky," which became a hit for Billy, who performed it, as well as for Dad, its >>

co-author. The song had peaked in the top 10 and earned a Grammy nomination.

We weren't sure what Billy was doing here; we hadn't been told he was coming. But he picked me up, chortling "Boobie baby, oh baby, boobie," as he embraced me, then threw me over his shoulder before tossing me in the pool. Adam outweighed me by 20 pounds, but Billy, thin yet built, swung him under his arm too, squeezed his head to his chest and then lobbed him into the water.

Billy, surely high on cocaine, couldn't believe how big we'd gotten. The last time he'd seen us, he said, was back on 94th Street. "Adam, baby, you were naked, I remember, and you had my new LP in your hands and you were covering up your privates with the album sleeve, which was real cute, yeah. And Julie, baby, you were sucking on your mama's tit. God bless the lord. God bless him!" Billy kneeled down. He said that Uncle Billy thought of us as his own baby boys and we could always count on him for anything we ever needed and we should spend more time together because life went too fast and he couldn't stand to think that the whole thing could pass us by without the three of us having more time together. He waved his arms around to emphasise his excitement, no longer about the fact that we were seeing one another for the first time in five years but because the world and God and love and Los Angeles and my father and Elina and the sky and the air and the universe was a gift that we had to celebrate right now.

"You know what I'm saying, babies? You hear Uncle Billy? God, your dad and I are going to write some hits this week. That I know. Billy's been at his piano all day writing songs like you never heard before. I'm talking James Brown and Stevie Wonder and John Lennon stuck their golden hands deep down into my belly and sent a message to me that went right through my hands and up into my head and I started to sing — and wham bam thank you ma'am, we are back. You know I love you, don't you? You know Billy loves you. Oh God, you two are beautiful. You are my beautiful boys."

Adam and I stared up at Billy from the pool, our hair in our faces, ears clogged with water. Billy threw each of us a towel and told us to dry off and take him up to the apartment because he had big news to tell our father. Any fears about what was happening between Dad and Elina were vanquished. Billy was too powerful a force, his presence shone too brightly, his enthusiasm was larger than any conflict — and we followed behind him, jogging up the stairs. Billy threw open the door. The apartment was quiet.

"Anybody home?" Billy shouted. He looked back at us, grinning. "Where's my hit-maker? Where's my second wife? Come on, kids, get out here and give me some love. I'm about to make you wish you could live forever."

Dad stepped out of the bedroom, his eyes small and corrupted by mania. Elina walked just behind him, her face red from tears and her blonde hair dishevelled. But Billy was too disposed to joy — and, yes, high on drugs — to let anything spoil his good feeling.

"Baby, baby, baby, baby…all my babies look so sad and I don't care if you think you're face-to-face with the end of the world, but you guys have got too much love in your hearts and too much beauty in your souls to let the pain take over and get the better of your minutes here on God's earth."

"Billy, please," my dad said. He was at the fridge, drinking from a litre of orange juice. "Not now."

"Not now, Walty? Not now!" Billy held his hands out toward my father. "Baby, you got a beautiful wife and you got your holy, holy children and the day is growing old, my friend, and we got to get on with the loving 'cause there ain't no encore in this game. Now, what in the world could be tearing you boys and girls up like this that you can't find the glory of this day in your heart? Give it to me. Tell Billy. Tell him. Let him know. I want to hear what hurts. I got to know what hurts you so bad inside that the tears are running down your sweet, sweet wife's eyes."

Dad said, "Billy, this is not the time, okay?"

"Okay, you say? Okay? No, boobie, no. No, no, no. I need love. I need you to give me the Walty Newman love I come for. Okay, you got to take the time now to clear the black from your heart and find the love. Now, would it help if I told you I been on the phone all day with Polydor" — the label had released Billy's last two records — "and they want another album and that I need Walty, my hit-maker, to testify with a cut or two or three? Baby, we got to get down and make love tonight. I want to have a song on their desk by Monday."

"I'm working on my record, Billy. I don't have time."

Billy brought his hands through his hair, blew air out his mouth, then stared, first at Elina, then at me and Adam, a long stare that asked each of us to question whether this was my father or some impostor. Then, as if he were working out the chorus of a song, he said, "Oh, baby, baby, baby, baby, baby, baby, baby…."

Billy dreamed big. He believed God had given him one of the greatest rock-and-roll voices ever and that he would be as successful, as famous, as Bruce Springsteen or Bob Seger, that was that. He was always after my father to help him take over the world. They had written one big hit, in 1980. Now it was 1987. If you had asked Billy seven years earlier how many chart-toppers they'd have penned by now, Billy would have asked how many Hall and Oates had to their credit and then he would have told you to double the number. But alas, Billy and Dad were stuck at one. And Billy, speaking to my father in this depressing Hollywood apartment, and feeling all the anger and despair and darkness pulsating between these walls, was stupefied by my father's resistance but far from giving up.

"So you're saying my most talented master songwriter can't spend a couple of extra hours this week at the piano with his brother-in-arms his best man Billy, and get down a little harder? The people are dying for more. They are dying, Walty, dying to turn on their radios and make love to Walty and Billy, and God tells me that we got no choice but to give them what they want. Are you going to say no? Julie, baby! Adam, baby! You think your daddy should say no to me right now when what I'm offering is to dance right back to the top of the airwaves and earn a mint and give love to the world?" The air-conditioning was on, and my wet bathing suit was cold against my legs. This was no time to open my mouth. Adam, likewise, kept his shut. But Elina said, "Billy, Walter is having a hard time."

"Oh, well, God gave me eyes and I can see that my brother is hurting. I will ease your pain, Walty."

Billy had seen action in Vietnam. Though he never mentioned the details of his tour, he did like to bring up — as he did now — the fact that he'd nearly lost his life and that he would not waste a minute feeling pity for himself. "Oh, yes, you know where I've been, Walter, and you know I can't talk about it, not here, in front of the kids and your beautiful wife. But we cannot waste our time in this world. Any minute could be our last. We've got to do what we've been put here to do, and for you and me that's write great songs. Come to me, Walty. Don't say no. I need you. And you need me. Now let's bring it on home."

Dad didn't say yes, but Billy had shaken him from his black-dog mood, gotten him to smile. Dad said, "You're out of your f#cking mind, you know that?"

"I do know that, Walty. But that's why Billy's one of the special ones, damn it. I love you. I love you so much, Walty. I love your boys. I love your wife. I'm crazy and in love with all of you so much it makes me want to cry and sing and

write hit songs. Right now, though, right now, I think it's time we go eat some cheeseburgers. Your kids look hungry."

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We went to a diner on Sunset and took a booth in the back with windows facing out at a dumpster. Billy told the waitress we were definitely going to need a plate of french fries right away, and a couple of chocolate milkshakes, and that these boys, that is, Adam and I, were from New York City. "In LA for a little fun!" He was laughing and pointing and shooting knowing looks at the waitress as if they had a history. But the waitress was unimpressed or didn't care, and she asked if we still needed menus. Billy, slapping his hands to the table and gazing deeply into Adam's eyes, then mine, shook his head and said five cheeseburgers medium rare would do but to hold the lettuce and keep any coleslaw that might come on the side as far from the table as she could.

"Thanks, darling. You have a gorgeous soul."

The waitress was over 60, her eyeshadow was the orange of a smoggy LA sky at sunset, her hair was white and heavily curled, and her lips looked like they'd pulled on over a hundred thousand cigarettes. She flipped her pad closed and gave Billy a wink. Billy returned the gesture and said, "Billy loves you." Then he turned to Dad and began to tell him how much he missed him and that he had been writing more songs than ever, tunes were spilling out of him fully formed, with words and melodies and piano lines, but that he was hearing Dad's voice in the room with him, these harmonies that Dad would have to add to the tracks. In particular, to the chorus of a song called "Memory Repeats." Billy began to sing the part right there at the table.

" 'Mem-or-y…re-peats…dah…day…day dah… day…dah.' And Walty, Walty, you go" now Billy sang in falsetto, with all 10 of his fingers opening like the petals of a tulip above his head "'Mem-or-y… re-peats.' Like that, up there, 'Re-peats!' I got a tape of it in the car. We'll take a drive up in the hills after we eat and have a couple of listens, talk it out, then pop over to my place and spend the night at the piano, treating our souls to the mercy, the mercy, Walty, that they're crying out for."

Dad nodded. By now, his colouring, his brow, his posture, were commensurate with the sort of relief that came with letting go, the gratitude of being free of it. Though Billy was responsible for Dad's improved mental state, this didn't mean that Dad was pleased to be in Billy's company or that he was even comfortable around him in general. Dad was at his best with Billy when the two old friends were seated together at a piano with a pen and pad resting on the music stand with a song in the works.

I could remember them in the living room on 94th Street, going from noon until the early morning hours. At the piano, at work with Billy, Dad was confident, focused, open, inspired. But anywhere else, with the God wants me to go to number one Billy, with the Billy loves you more than you could ever know Billy, with the day is too beautiful to let sadness into your heart Billy anywhere with any of these other Billys, and Dad grew irritable. He looked up to Billy, who was four years older and had already released three solo records and experienced what it was to be a pop star. Dad craved a mentor-disciple relationship with Billy, and the acceptance and confirmation that came with that. Yes, had Billy asked my father how his record was coming along, or if he wanted to play any of the cuts and talk about them, or if he could help in any way, had he been able to quiet the part of himself that made my father truly bristle most that is, the Billy who, like right now, raved on evangelically about the two of them writing number one hits - this would have brought my father to life, caused him to open up and treat Billy with love.

"Oh, that burger is juicy. Hey, Julie, baby… Adam…now, you know.. you know that your daddy's the most handsome man in rock and roll, don't you? I'm saying, I have met every leading man in the business and there is no betterlooking living example than your daddy." Billy was hunkered over the table, his grin mischievous yet serious. "Now, Elina, you cover up your ears if you have to, but the boys have got to know this about their daddy, okay? Boys, I'm telling you, more women have fallen in love with your daddy than any man to grace a stage, including Elvis Presley and that's the truth. Just look at him. Look at that face, those eyes, those lips. Walty Newman is a lady-killer, and the day he married you, beautiful," he said to Elina, "a million sweet young girls cried themselves to sleep. Yes, they cried, and I heard them and I held them and I told them that it was all going to be okay, because Billy was going to write a song for them, for all the girls who couldn't have Walty Newman of Hoboken, New Jersey."

"Billy, the boys don't have to hear this."

"Sure they do! They do, they love to hear it. Don't you, boys? Don't you? You know how good a daddy you got, don't you?"

"Yeah," we said.

Billy reached over the table and took my father's head in his hands. "Walty, you got it all,

If he was on stage, he was throwing roses to the girls in the front rows, confessing his love for them.

my brother. You have got it all." He let go of Dad and then said to him, "I'm so proud of you. You inspire me, baby."

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Dad went off with Billy after dinner, who knows where. But the next day, when I told Dad how nice it had been to see Billy and what a terrific guy he was and funny too, Dad said that Billy was great, sure, that everyone loved Billy and that Dad did too, that they were like brothers, but that Billy could be a real pain in the ass. He swung in, from nowhere. You never saw Billy coming, because if he called and told you he was on his way then he'd be forfeiting the impact of blindsiding you, which would decrease his chances of getting what he wanted. That's right, he was never there just to say hi and give you an hour about what he had been up to since the last time and to find out about your life. There was always an agenda, my father was telling me as I worked the foldout bed in the living room back into a couch. You saw Billy and you had to deal with a whole vision that included you and every second of your life.

"And I've got nothing to give him right now. Nothing," my father said sharply.

We were alone together in the apartment, Adam and Elina down at the pool. I folded the blanket, straightened the pillows, avoiding Dad's eyes. It would have been the wrong time to tell him how last night Billy had saved us from Dad, and that I was grateful to him. That if Billy hadn't showed up when he had, Dad and Elina would have fought all night. Who knew if we would have ever gotten around to dinner. And we would have gone to sleep to their screaming. "He's telling me, 'Just come over for a week and we'll write a whole record.' But he doesn't see what I'm going through. He doesn't care that I'm making a solo record of my own right now. It means nothing to him. It's all about Billy, Jules."

"Yeah."

"And I gave him 10 years. I did the Billy thing for 10 years. Now I'm doing me, and I can't let him in. I just can't do it!"

"Okay, Dad."

"There's a lack of respect," he said. "He takes no interest in my work, unless it benefits him. And what kind of friend is that? I mean, I don't even know if he ever listened to the first record. He might have put it on. But I mean, did he really listen? I doubt it. He had no comments whatsoever about any of it. And it's just unbelievable. Because I've supported him so long. I have dug in so hard to his music, written so much of it with him, and know it all so well. But there's no reciprocation, Jules. It's just all about him. And you know, music's not like that. Sure, you're competing with your peers, but you're also in it together, and you want to know what everyone's making and, if possible, let it inspire you. But not with Billy. At least not when it comes to me and my solo career. Maybe he's threatened I'm going to outdo him. As far I'm concerned, that's no excuse. He says he loves me. Well, he's got to love me when I'm doing better than him too. He's got to champion me, just like I do him."

We went to the Ralphs to buy a loaf of bread and a dozen eggs. I was following Dad through the grocery store, and I could tell he was lost in the aisles, distracted, almost happily, talking about the pain and fear and confusion of a person who goes out and seeks the acceptance of all people, who cannot bear to be disliked by anyone, cannot tolerate it, and will try to take down in the eyes of others any person who does not or cannot be made to love him.

But Billy was a performer, Dad was saying, always turning it on. If he was on stage, he was throwing roses to the girls in the front rows, confessing his love for them — and their city — from down on his knees, and begging after the second encore to never let the night end because it was going to hurt him too much to say good night. And if he was having a meeting with the heads at Polydor he was swiveling in his chair, rolling his shoulders and snapping his finger in time with a song he was making up right there on the spot, and then telling those executives how lucky they were to have a voice like his on their label and how the good lord had blessed Billy by bringing them together so that his voice could get to the people. And if he was in your mother's living room, he was telling her that she was the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen in all his life and that he'd like to move right into her house if she'd let him because there seemed to him no better place to live in the whole wide world. Even the guy washing his car would have been asked what he was doing shining windshields when he was handsome enough to be a leading man in Hollywood. The routine was practised, but it was genuine, it came from a real place inside him. Becoming that person was so natural for Billy. Dad said so now, not without adding, however, that a part of it was schtick, a game that Dad was not willing to participate in.

"But I worry about Billy, Jules. I do," he said breathlessly. "You look at him and you think he's having the best time, that life's so good for him, but he's in a lot of pain. A lot of pain."

"Is he?"

"Anyone who expends that kind of effort trying to make everyone love him is destroyed inside."

"Can you help him, Dad?"

My father shook his head. And for a moment, in the dairy aisle at Ralphs, I could tell my father felt above Billy. He might have loved his friend, yes, but he was taking pleasure in the thought that between the two of them, Billy was the truly damaged one. ■

A&E
NISHANT

CASSANDRA
STARR
Photography by ARTHUR ST. JOHN Text by NELLY MADUNA
Hair & Make-up ARYANNA E. MARTIN

Where were you born? Where did you grow up? Where do you live now?
I was born in the Catskill Mountains and I grew up there. It's a small town and it was a K-12 school in Windham and there were 40 kids in my graduating class, and I still know them all somehow! Now I bounce around from Brooklyn, to Los Angeles, and my home office is still in the Catskills and I like to get out of the city and rest there when I have the opportunity

You're officially a Playboy model, what does this mean to you?
I'm stoked and excited. It is a goal I reached. I worked hard for it. I genuinely appreciate being given the opportunity and the photographer Arthur St. John who pushed me. Modelling is a difficult job. It has been the most difficult for me because of the discipline it takes. I hope it brings more modelling and acting opportunities and the ability to travel

What's your favourite colour?
Blue

Favourite style of music?
Depends on my mood. Either classic rock or rap.

Favourite artist?
I'm obsessed with Rae Sremmurd's Powerglide at the moment and love blasting it when I drive to work

Favourite movie of all time?
I have too many favourites, but Pulp Fiction is bad ass. I love Martin Scorsese and Stanley Kubrick films. Coen Brothers are dope too.

How often do you work out?
Depends on if I have photoshoots. If I have photoshoots I work out 5 times a week, and if not, twice a week. I've been going to school and working full-time so it has been hard to juggle it all.

Describe your perfect man
He already exists. Sexy, sweet, hardworking, smart, funny, and just someone I can laugh with and have fun with and create art with

Describe your perfect date
I'm going to do the whole day. Coffee and healthy snack. Maybe a Hike or sightseeing, walking around, shopping. Dinner and drinks. I love the ocean and mountains so something outdoors is always fun. Boats are fun. Pools are fun. Foreign island hopping is fun too

Favourite body part on you? Favourite body part on a man?
I like my eyes. I guess eyes on a man are nice. As well as a fit body and nice chiseled face structure is always hot

What are your pet peeves?
When people act ignorant, judge, lie, hate, or make the world into a worse place

Tell us something about you not too many people know
I wrote a pilot I'm trying to get picked up/financed called Nobody. My last name really is Starr. I'm a third-generation professional dancer and grew up dancing and touring with my mom and grandma. I have a Pitbull named Jasper. I love him, he's the best. Dancing is my true love. My brother Julius Starr is a pro snowboarder. My family is all in the arts and we were always performing and getting ready for plays, musicals, recitals and tours

Describe yourself using only 3 adjectives
Funny, Spontaneous, and Intelligent.

If you can change any one thing about you, what would it be?
I wish I had $1,000,000 just chilling in a bank account right now #goals

What would you consider to be your biggest challenge as a model so far?
I'm only 5'8" so for runway that's short. Always an issue that arises. Keeping my weight down, I can definitely tell when I've been drinking red wine and eating grilled cheese as compared to drinking green juice and eating kale salad. My body can fluctuate based on stress too so I try to stay stress free even though I have a lot on my plate. Meditation and yoga help

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?
I would love to be producing and acting in my own films or for directors with good material. I would like to be married and have a kid. I would like to live in multiple places. I would like to run my own company as well that is a consulting company, and I sort of already am doing that anyway, but yeah, family and happy would be nice

Follow more of Cassandra's adventures on Instagram @ starrslife

An American Outlaw

An incident over supposedly indecent photos transformed Hugh Hefner into a tireless defender of free speech

It was late afternoon, June 4, 1963, and Hugh Hefner lay asleep in bed in his Chicago mansion. The then 37-year-old had stayed up into the early hours of that day, working on the August instalment of his sprawling Playboy Philosophy, and he desperately needed sleep. But it was not to be. Hefner's housekeeper awakened him with the ominous news that four members of the Chicago Police Department's vice squad were downstairs wielding a warrant for his arrest. Hefner kept them waiting for more than an hour, until his two attorneys arrived. Finally, the PLAYBOY editor-in-chief and publisher emerged, wearing a pink cardigan, white sports shirt and dark slacks. He requested and was granted permission to change into a suit, whereupon Chicago's finest placed him under arrest and drove him to the central police building five miles down the road. The charge? Publishing obscenity. The offending material? The Nudest Jayne Mansfield, PLAYBOY's June 1963 full-colour pictorial and behind-the-scenes peek at the buxom actress's latest movie, in which she would appear in the buff.

Like defamation and so-called fighting words, obscenity was then (and still is) classified as unprotected speech — that is, not covered by the protections granted under the First Amendment. The definition of obscenity had been laid out in 1957's Roth v. United States. An "average person," the Supreme Court decided, would be able to recognise it when "the dominant theme of the material taken as a whole appeals to prurient interest."

In other words, obscenity was highly subjective. And Hefner recognised immediately what was at stake. "The freedoms of speech and press are among the most precious guaranteed

Hugh Hefner

by the US Constitution," he later wrote in the October 1963 Playboy Philosophy, in which he addressed his arrest. "Without them, all other freedoms would soon vanish and our democracy itself would disappear."

After posting bail, Hef was free in under an hour. But he and others were left to wonder at the city of Chicago's motivations. As Chicago Sun-Times columnist Irv Kupcinet asked, "The obvious question...is: Why now? PLAYBOY has been publishing nudes...for years." Mansfield was by then a longtime PLAYBOY favourite. She had first appeared in the magazine as the February 1955 Playmate and then each February in all but one year through 1960.

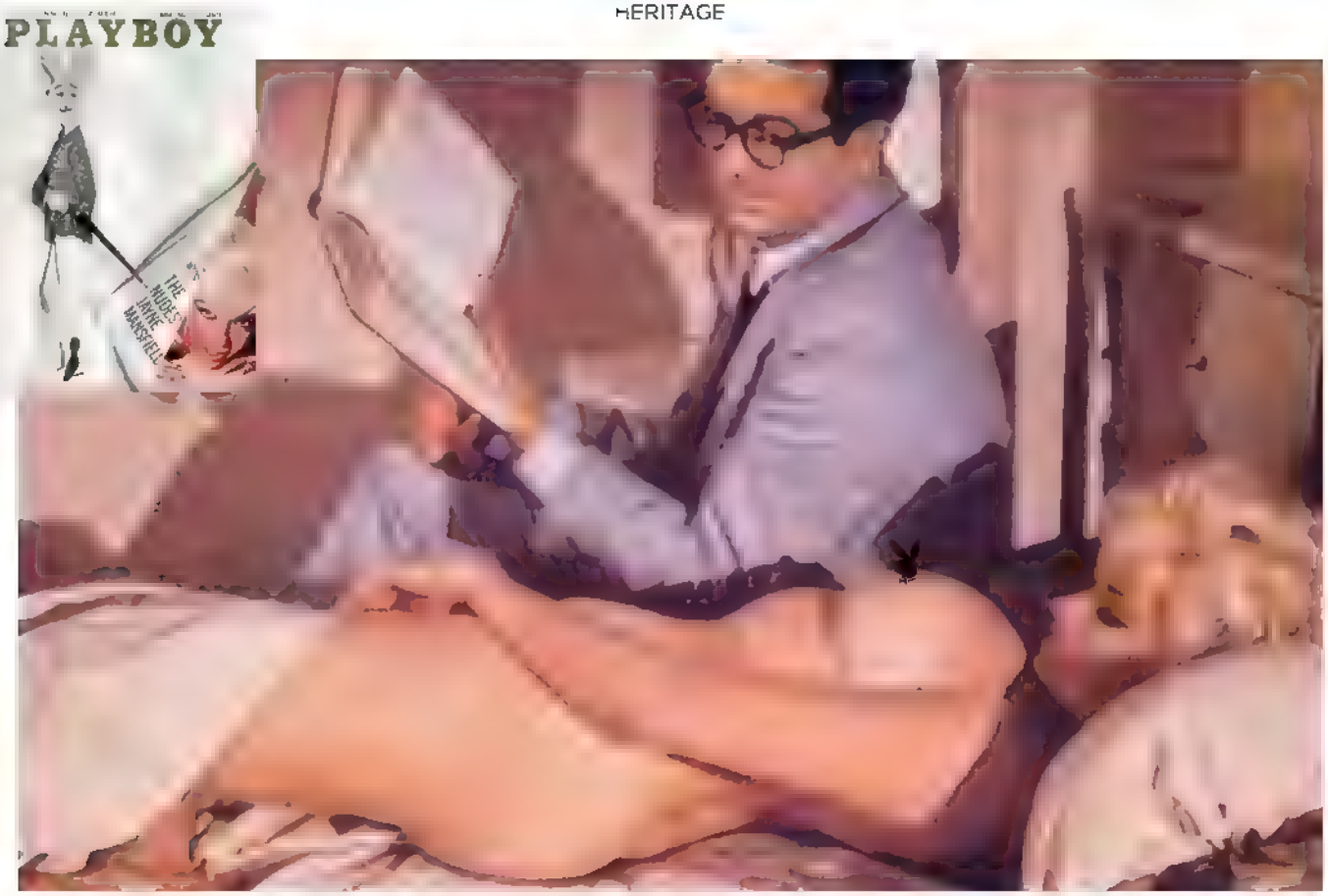
Chicago prosecutor John Melaniphy told the press that the charge of obscenity was grounded in a combination of factors: The magazine had printed photos of a man in a business suit sitting next to a nude Mans field lying in bed, with captions that describe her as writhing and gyrating. Taken together, Melaniphy contended, the content was so suggestive as to be obscene.

But behind the attempted censorship Hefner saw other forces at work — forces that had nothing to do with nudity. In December 1962 comedian Lenny Bruce had played a Chicago club and been busted mid-act for obscenity; the city put him on trial in February 1963. Hef ner defended the controversial comedian and his "blue" material in two subsequent appearances of the Playboy Philosophy. He saw a direct cause and effect. "I criticised Chicago authorities for Lenny's arrest," he later wrote in Hugh Hefner's Playboy. "In response, the Chicago authorities came and arrested me. The excuse they used was a pictorial on Jayne Mansfield."

Legal proceedings soon got underway in the city's case against Hefner. In a July 25 hearing, the prosecution argued that the June 1963 PLAYBOY was "filth for the sake of filth." Hefner's attorney's attempted to have the case thrown out, to no avail, a court date was set for the fall.

On November 19 a jury of 11 women and one man was selected. The trial began the following day, with reporters from newspapers, radio stations and television shows packing the Chicago municipal courtroom. Hefner attended, accompanied by a Playmate. A Playboy publicist handed out copies of the Playboy Philosophy.

The trial was fiery but without major incident, with the city arguing that the Mansfield pictorial inflamed the sexual appetite.



PLAYBOY's June 1963 pictorial The Nudest Jayne Mansfield landed Hugh Hefner in trouble with the city of Chicago, whose prosecutors argued that the photos and captions were too suggestive for print. Above: One of the photos cited in the court case. Inset: The June cover teases the pictorial

To support its case, the prosecution brought forth experts, including a Loyola University psychology professor who testified that the nude photographs of the actress appealed to the "prurient interest of the average reader." Under cross-examination, the professor refused to acknowledge that his opinion was personal rather than professional but did allow that moral judgments fall outside the realm of psychology.

Naturally the defence team marshalled to the witness stand its own psychology experts, who contended that the material was not obscene. Hef's attorneys even appealed to the jury's patriotism, referencing Benjamin Franklin's "Letters to Young Men on Choosing a Mistress" and calling Franklin a "playboy of 1776." Hefner, of course, was called to testify, he declared that a mere five percent of his magazine was devoted to nude or semi-nude women. More important, he argued, every individual reader should be able to decide for themselves what they find morally and ethically acceptable.

On December 6 both sides rested, and the decision went to the jury. It took only eight hours of deliberation for the jurors to realise they were deadlocked; they later revealed to reporters that they'd reached an impasse, with the vote at seven to five in favour of acquittal. On December 7 the judge ruled a mistrial, letting Hefner off the hook.

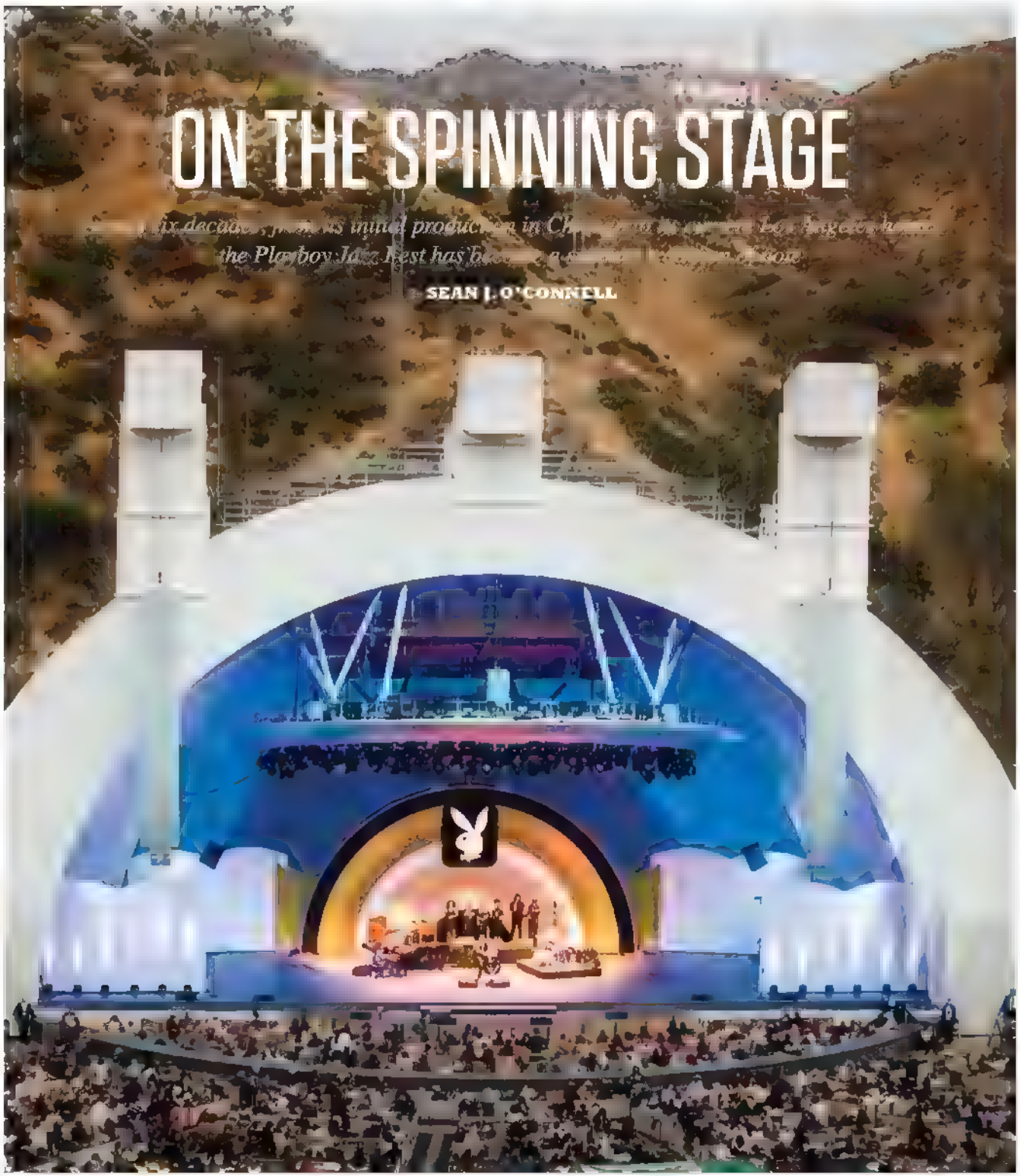
Following his trial, Hefner appeared more determined than ever to unshackle America from the constraints of conservatism. The legal entanglement had left him undaunted and seemingly defiant: In February 1964 PLAYBOY published a pictorial that seemed to be a sharp rejoinder to critics of the Mansfield photos. Taken on a movie set, the images once again feature a clothed man sitting beside a naked actress in a bed. And the trial, if anything, had been good for the magazine, the massive publicity led to what Hefner characterised as the "virtual sellout" of the June 1963 issue — close to 2.1 million copies were sold.

Chicago's attempt to curtail Hefner's growing empire seems to have galvanised his evolution into a free-speech advocate. "We must be constantly on the alert," Hef wrote in his October 1963 Playboy Philosophy, "to make certain that the label of 'obscene' is not used to censor other areas of free speech and press that are our precious heritage, but to which some fellow member of society — for whatever reason — may object."

Hefner didn't just talk the talk. In 1964 he formed the Hugh M. Hefner Foundation, whose principal goal is to defend First Amendment rights in addition to championing civil liberties. Over the years the foundation has given awards to more than 100 individuals — from lawyers and librarians to high school students and journalists — to recognise their work fighting censorship and safeguarding First Amendment protections.

In 2010 Hefner reflected on the origins of his convictions. "I saw the hypocrisy in the notion that obscenity could somehow be connected to sex, instead of to war and bigotry," he told Vanity Fair. "I believed that sex, when properly understood, could be the best of who we are." ■

HERITAGE



ON THE SPINNING STAGE

...ix decade... ...as initial produc... ...in Ch... ...Los Angeles h... ...the Playboy Jazz Fest has b... ...tion.

SEAN J. O'CONNELL

The first Playboy Jazz Festival took place in Chicago in August 1959. Noted music critic Leonard Feather later called it "the greatest single weekend in the history of jazz."

It was an outrageously confident promise: "See and hear more great stars in one weekend than most people see in a lifetime," declared ads for the first ever Playboy Jazz Festival. But the three-day August 1959 event more than delivered.

The brainchild of Hugh Hefner, the first jazz festival was part celebration of PLAYBOY's five year anniversary and part marketing strategy, a way to raise the magazine's profile and stake out cultural territory. The powerhouse line-up featured such first-ballot hall of famers as Dave Brubeck, Dizzy Gillespie, Louis Armstrong,b Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Coleman Hawkins, Nina Simone and Sonny Rollins. Five concerts showcased more than three dozen acts, and the cheap seats cost a little more than a buck. That August weekend Playboy had taken the first step in creating what would become one of the liveliest and longest-running jazz festivals in America — though two decades would pass before it took the second step.

From the introductory issue of PLAYBOY in December 1953, jazz had supplied the soundtrack. It was one of four topics Hefner suggested his readers would enjoy discussing with women — Nietzsche, Picasso and sex being the others. In 1957 the magazine introduced an annual reader's poll of the hottest jazz acts and released vinyl collections featuring the winners. Music reviews and ads for hi-fi systems and the newest releases from Gerry Mulligan and Charles Mingus abound in early issues. "Jazz is the most personal of arts," Hefner declared, "and, if we bring our passion to it, we are rewarded." For Hefner, that passion demanded a living, breathing outlet.

But the festival faced a crisis before it was even underway, recalls Dick Rosenzweig, who in 1958 had begun what was to be a nearly 60-year career with Playboy: "We got a call from the mayor's office. They informed us that they were sorry, but we could no longer hold the festival outside at Soldier Field." Moving quickly, the Playboy team secured the Chicago Stadium, an enclosed, air-conditioned arena. "It rained like hell that weekend," Rosenzweig says. "So thank you, Mayor Daley."

The festival opened Friday night with 33-year-old trumpeter Miles Davis at the height of his powers, spinning elongated soul on Kind of Blue's "So What?" alongside alto saxophonist Cannonball Adderley. Playboy donated the proceeds from the evening to the Chicago Urban League, a civil rights organisation. Vocalist trio Lambert, Hendricks & Ross put the perfect ring-a-ding swing on Saturday night, while Ella Fitzgerald closed the weekend with a spirited "How High the Moon," levelling the crowd with blasts of nimble scatting. (It had taken $10,000 — twice the amount any other performer earned that weekend — to land Fitzgerald.)

Billboard declared the event an "overwhelming success." The musicians and crowds were happy, and the magazine was elated. Nearly 70,000 tickets had been sold across the three days. Ambitious plans for a 1960 jazz fest — one that would take place in three cities — were discussed, but nothing materialised. "We were in such an expansive and go-go mood, there was only so much we could do," says Rosenzweig. "We were constantly busy doing other events and promotions." The first Playboy Club, for example, opened in Chicago in 1960, and locations around the world soon followed. With distractions like that, it's no wonder the festival went quiet.

• • •

In the early 1970s Hefner bought Playboy Mansion West and began to spend more time in Los Angeles. When he finally decamped from Chicago to the West Coast, he brought his love of jazz with him. So when the magazine's 25th anniversary rolled around in 1979, what better way to celebrate than to revive the jazz fest, 20 years after its original incarnation?

On June 15, 1979, the revitalised Playboy Jazz Festival, now a two-day affair, kicked off on the Hollywood Bowl's iconic half-dome stage. Local promoter Darlene Chan produced the event. "I put all the elements together," she says — everything from booking talent to co-ordinating lights, sound and transportation. In the two decades between the first and second jazz festivals, much had changed within the jazz world, but Chan and her staff crafted a remarkable line-up that included Benny Goodman, Sarah Vaughan, Art Blakey and Herbie Hancock. Acts that leaned outside the jazz world — such as Joni Mitchell, who played tunes from her collaboration with Mingus — signalled that the fest would be musically inclusive.

For almost 40 years the festival has presided over rain-free weekends at the Bowl, with Chan working behind the scenes every year. It has become the unofficial start of summer in LA, a weekend when the hardest part can be trying to keep up with the rest of the attendees. A vast range of jazz acts (Tony Bennett, Ornette Coleman, Dianne Reeves), world music artists >>

Miles Davis (above) and Ella Fitzgerald (far right) performed at the 1959 Playboy Jazz Festival. Twenty years later and thousands of miles west, Playboy revived the fest at the Hollywood Bowl, where it has been an annual event ever since. Sarah Vaughan performed at the first LA event (top left); Hef signed a fan's program in 1983 (middle).

(Hugh Masekela, King Sunny Ade) and pop outfits (the Roots, Common, Ozomatli, Sheila E) have all performed tight 50-minute sets. The crowds are huge and energetic, often enlivened by the contents of their picnic baskets — one perk of the Bowl is that patrons can bring their own food and drink. Across its hardwood benches, stadium chairs and intimate box seats, the Bowl can accommodate 17,500 revellers. The summer sun slowly works its way to the back of the amphitheatre, a peak glow nestling into the dinner hour.

Ten-time Grammy-winning guitarist and vocalist George Benson has been a frequent performer, occupying that perfect position between instrumental virtuosity and tender R&B suavity. A natural and engaging frontman, Benson knows how to entertain both the champagne sippers in the front and the Jell-O shot pounders in the back of the house.

"In a large place like the Bowl, you're trying to reach that person way out in the last row," Benson says. "In a little room, they hear you and feel what you're doing. To get that sound out to the last row in the Hollywood Bowl, that's difficult. It's not just the sound system; it's how you play what you play and the selection of the materials. You have to find the spot."

The festival has grown into an institution, showcasing some of the most significant jazz musicians of the past half-century. It also fosters up-and-coming talent. Inviting young performers to fill the opening time slots has become an enduring tradition. And as LA's largest jazz fest, playing it serves as a measure of success for local artists.

Bassist and singer Miles Mosley, a member of the trailblazing West Coast Get Down collective, first played the festival with his high school band in the late 1990s. Last year Mosley had his own festival berth, leading his chameleonic soul band through a set of songs indebted to the City of Angels. For him, it was the fulfilment of a childhood dream. "The Playboy Jazz Festival is the pinnacle of what you seek to attain as a kid looking at your musical heroes," he says. "The first time that stage turns around and you see that crowd, man, it's an experience."

From three o'clock in the afternoon until 11 o'clock at night, the live music plays practically non-stop, facilitated by an innovation made possible by Playboy: A large centre-stage circular platform, bisected by a partition, ensures the continuous soundtrack. As one band plays on the audience-facing side of the platform, the other is a whirl of stagehands and musicians quickly loading out one band and setting up another. When one set ends, it fades into the next as the circle slowly revolves to reveal the upcoming act. It is unlike any other festival in its efficiency.

"We're blessed to have that turntable," says Chan. "It's what makes our festival a little different." When the Bowl was remodelled, Playboy paid to have the platform installed permanently. The old equipment required workers to rotate the stage manually. "Now I just press a button," says Chan.

Nearly 60 years after its debut, the festival is still carrying on Hefner's mission of bringing a lifetime's worth of music to a single weekend. (This year's all-star line-up includes Charles Lloyd and Lucinda Williams.) The only thing the listener has to do is remember to bring a corkscrew. ■

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